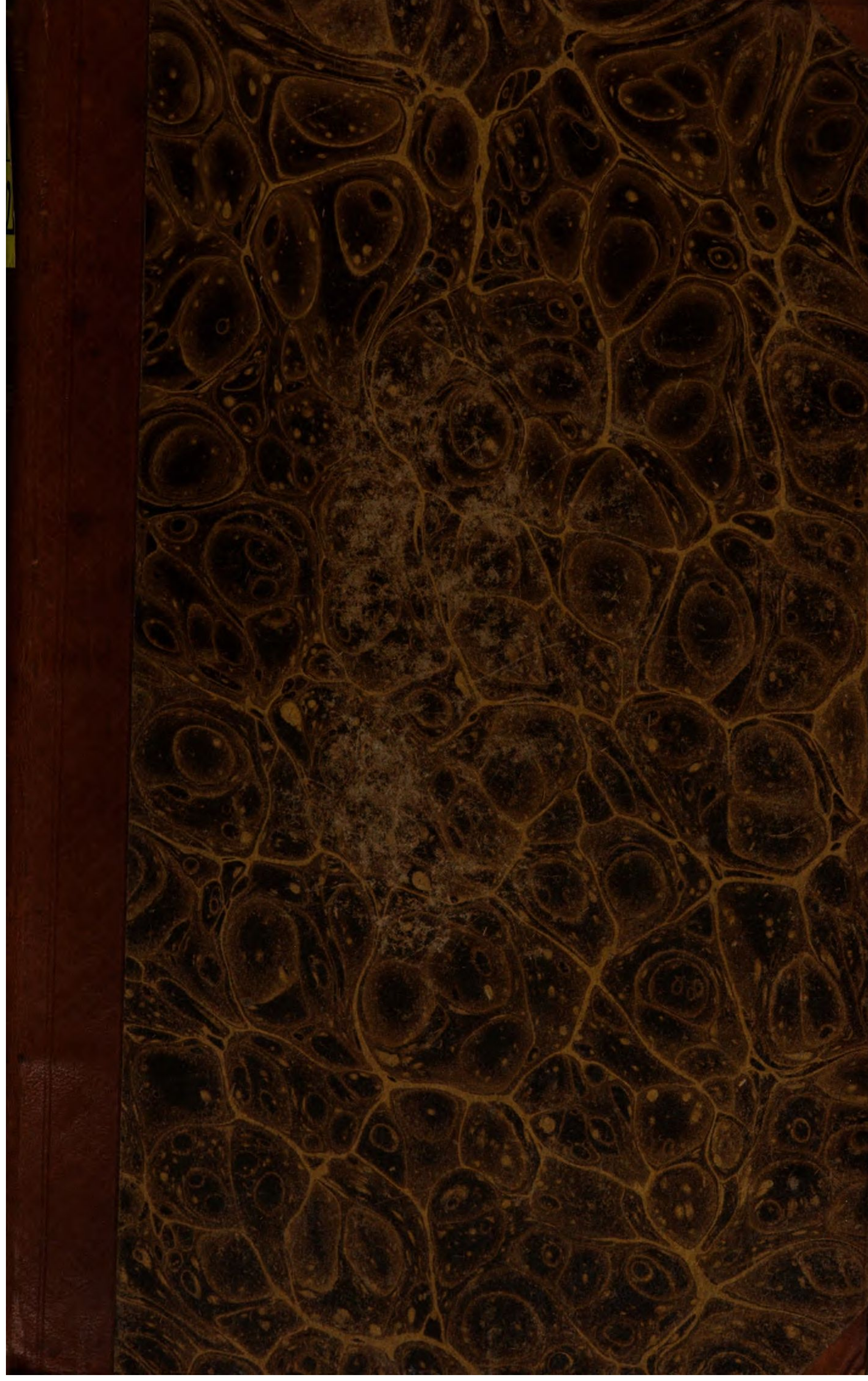
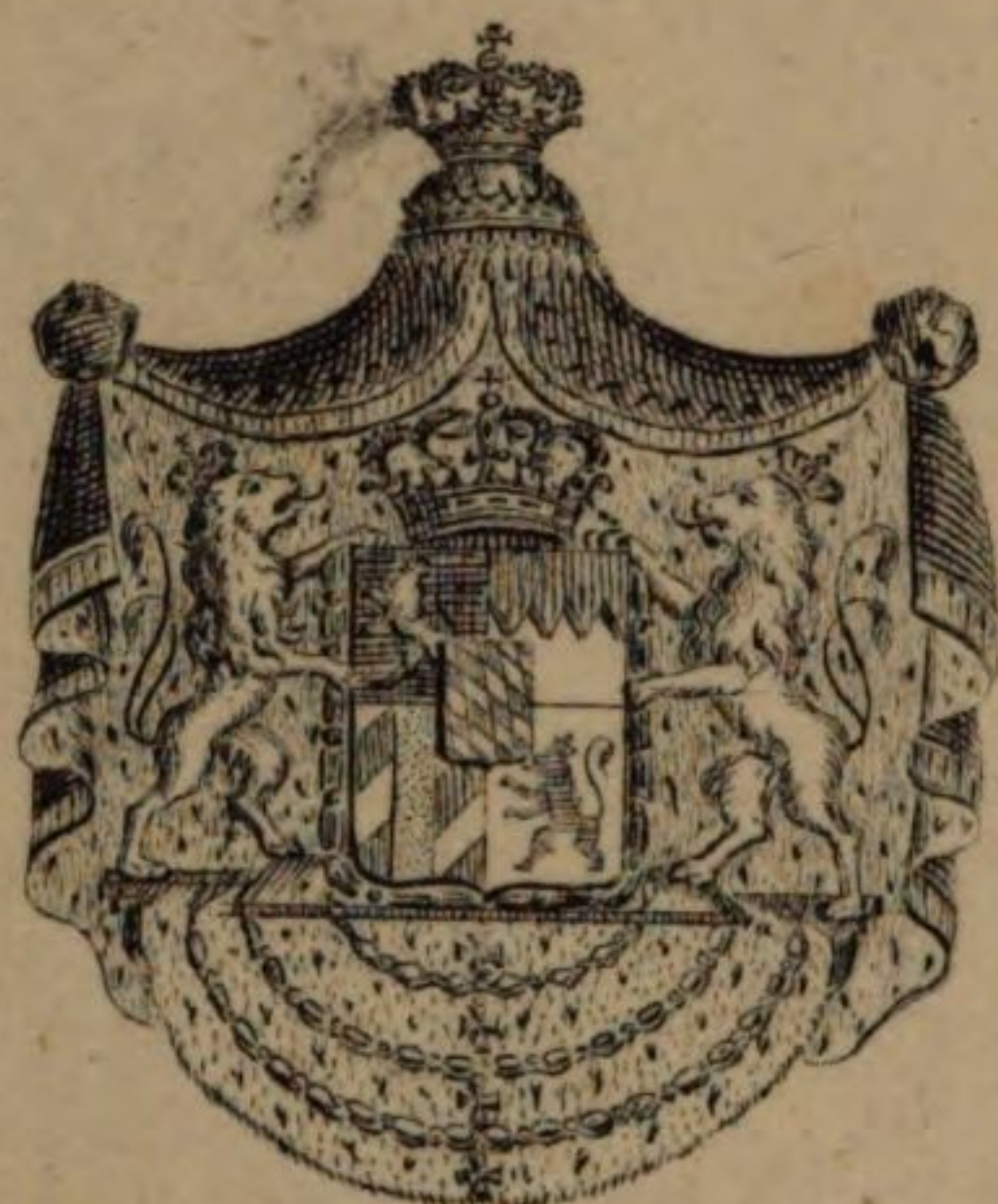




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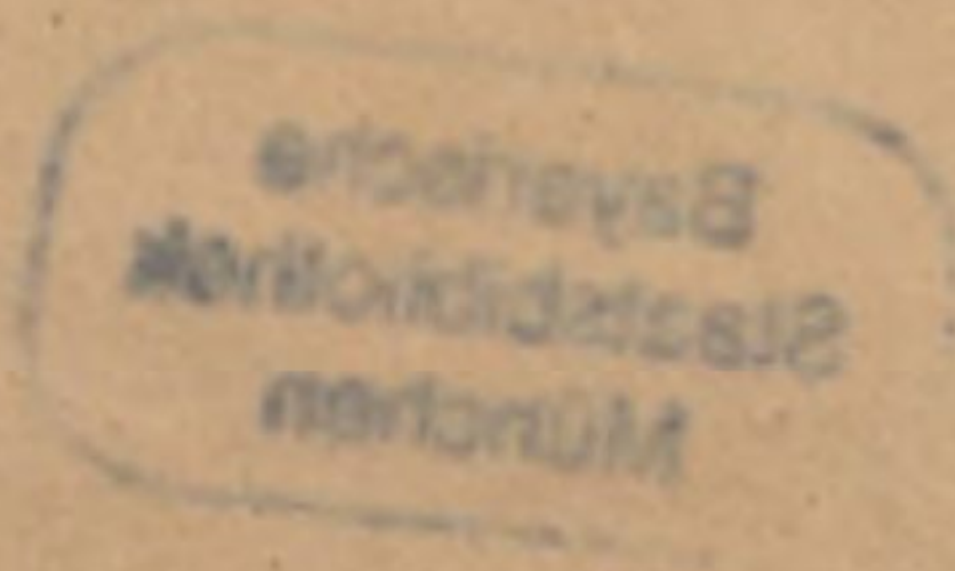
BY THE

**MOST POPULAR AND FASHIONABLE WRITERS
OF THE PRESENT DAY.**

IN FIFTY VOLUMES.

VOL. X.

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DELAWARE;

OR,

THE RUINED FAMILY.

CHAPTER I.

THE sand in the hour-glass of happiness, is surely of a finer quality than that which rolls so slowly through the glass of this world's ordinary cares and fears. Oh ! how rosy-footed trip the minutes that lead along the dance of joy ! How sweetly they come, how swiftly they fly, how bright their presence, and how speedy their departure ! Every one who has ever had a pen in his hand, has said exactly the same words before me ; and therefore, though a little stale, they must be true.

The hours flew as lightly at Emberton Park as if they had plucked all the down from the wings of their good father Time, in order to furnish their own soft pinions ; and many of the days which intervened between the signature of the bill for twenty-five thousand pounds, given by Sir Sidney Delaware to Lord Ashborough, and the time when it was to become due, slipped away unnoticed. The worthy baronet suffered them to pass with very great tranquillity, relying perfectly upon the word of Mr Tims, that the money would be ready at the appointed period. As comfort, and happiness, too, are far less loquacious qualities than grief and anxiety, Sir Sidney thought it unnecessary to enter into any farther particulars with Burrel, than by merely thanking him, in general terms, for the advice he had given ; and by informing him that, in consequence of his son's second journey to London, his affairs were likely to be finally arranged in the course of a month or two. The miser also suffering himself, for a certain time, to be governed by his nephew—who well knew the only two strings which moved him like a puppet,

to be avarice and fear—did not attempt to give the young stranger at Emberton any information of the events which had taken place, till long after Captain Delaware's return; and, within five days of the time when the bill became due, Burrel, who had delayed his promised visit to Dr Wilton till he was almost ashamed to go at all, rode over to his rectory to pass a couple of days with the worthy clergyman, whom he found deep in all the unpleasant duties of his magisterial capacity. William Delaware, also, more active though less clearsighted than his father, allowed himself likewise to be deceived by the assurance of Mr Tims, that the money would be punctually ready; and thus the days might have passed by unheeded by any one, till the very moment that the money was required, had there not been another person concerned, whose views demanded that Burrel's twenty-five thousand pounds should not only be drawn for, but paid into the hands of the miser at Ryebury.

This person, who was far more suspicious and more on the alert than any of the party,

was no other than Mr Burrel's silent servant, Harding, who began to grow very uneasy at the delay which was taking place. This uneasiness was increased after his arrival with his master at Dr Wilton's, inasmuch as, at the very moment of their coming, the worthy clergyman was engaged in investigating some particulars in regard to the fire that had taken place at Mrs Darlington's, which had given rise to considerable suspicions of some foul play. The first, and perhaps the most important point, appeared to be, that of the whole plate which that worthy lady's house contained, not one ounce was to be found either fused or in its wrought state. In the next place, two or three persons who had first taken the alarm at Emberton, on the night of the fire, and had set out instantly to give assistance, deposed positively to having met a man, to all appearance heavily laden, coming down the hill—which circumstance, considering the time of night, was at least extraordinary. No one, however, could identify this person ; but from these facts, as well as from other minor incidents, which it may be unneces-

sary to mention, it seemed very clear that robbery had been committed during the progress of the fire, if not before.

On their arrival at the rectory, both Burrel and his servant were called upon by Dr Wilton, to state their recollections. Of the evidence given by the first, the worthy clergyman took a private note, but the servant was publicly examined. He gave a clear, calm statement of all that he remembered, mentioned the situation of the room in which he slept, declared that he had been woke by some sounds below, and had shortly after perceived a strong smell of fire, which increasing, he began to put on his clothes. Finding, however, that the smoke was growing thicker, and that other people in the house seemed alarmed, he had not staid to clothe himself completely, but had run out; and, seeing that the house was on fire, had proceeded to call his master. Mr Burrel not moving as fast as he thought prudent, he said, he had left him, and got out of danger as fast as he could.

All this was delivered with amazing coolness and perspicuity, and Dr Wilton complimented

him publicly on the clear and straightforward manner in which he delivered his evidence. Nevertheless, there was something in the whole business, which we—who see into the mechanism of our people's hearts—conceive, not to have been pleasing to the silent servant, and he felt it absolutely necessary—according to his own particular notions of benevolence—to remind his master, that the twenty-five thousand pounds which had been left idle, losing the interest all the time, in the hands of Messrs Steelyard and Wilkinson, might soon be necessary to complete the charitable purpose he entertained towards the family at Emberton.

To act remembrancer was not very easy, however, as his habitual silence cut off a great deal of even that small gossip which usually takes place between a man and his valet-de-chambre ; but Harding was not a person to be foiled, and what he could not do cunningly he always did boldly.

It was on the second night, then, of their stay at the rectory, that, while undressing his master, he began, after two or three preliminary

grunts, “I wished to ask your permission, sir—if you are going to send me to London”——

“Send you to London !” exclaimed Burrel, “I am not going to send you to London. What put such a thing into your head ?”

“Oh, I beg pardon, sir, I did not mean to offend !” replied Harding. “But when you first sent me to Mr Tims at Ryebury, he asked me a great many questions about you, and told me that you were going to pay off the incumbrances upon Sir Sidney Delaware’s estate.”

“Which, I suppose, you have been good enough to spread throughout the village !” said Burrel, not a little angry.

“I have never opened my mouth upon the subject, sir, to a living creature, upon my honour !” replied the man, with a solemnity of asseveration that was very suspicious.

“And pray, how is all this connected with your going to London, Harding ?” demanded his master.

“Why only, sir, as I hear the money is to be paid in three days, and you did not speak of going up yourself, I thought you might be going

to send me for the sum," was the cool and self-complacent reply of the worthy domestic.

"To be paid in three days!" exclaimed Burrel. "There must be some mistake in that, surely."

"Oh no, sir, I can assure you!" replied the man earnestly. "The last time I was up at the park, when I brought the horses to come over here, I heard the Captain saying so to Miss Delaware—and he said, that he hoped that Tims would have the money ready, or it would be a sad affair."

"Indeed!" said Burrel, "This must be looked to. But you misunderstand your situation, Harding. You are a person very trustworthy, I have no doubt; but I never send my servants for such sums as that you mention, especially when they have not been with me three months. So now, you may go—and when I want to send you to London, or elsewhere, I shall be sure to inform you."

The servant accordingly retired with a mortified and somewhat dogged air; but, although he had not been entirely without hopes, that his

master might indeed despatch him for the money, yet his purpose was sufficiently answered, to prevent his feeling deeply the disappointment of expectations that had never been very sanguine.

The tidings Burrel had heard, annoyed him considerably ; for, although a doubt never crossed his mind, in regard to the payment of the money having been made by Lord Ashborough, it seemed so extraordinary that Mr Tims had not made him acquainted with the day of payment, that a vague suspicion of something being wrong obtruded itself upon his imagination, and kept him for some time from sleep.

“ Which is my nearest way to a house called Ryebury, my dear sir ? ” was one of Burrel’s first questions to Dr Wilton at the breakfast-table next morning. “ It belongs to an old miserly money-lender, named Tims.”

“ The way to the money-lenders, like all those roads that lead to destruction, is wide enough,” replied Dr Wilton. “ But I hope, my dear Harry, you are not going to borrow money ? ”

“No, no, my dear sir !” answered Burrel, laughing. “Heaven knows what I should do with it, if I did. Within the last six years, I am sorry and ashamed to say, I have accumulated near five-and-twenty thousand pounds.”

“Fie, fie, that is almost as bad !” cried Dr Wilton. “I would never advise any man to live quite up to his income, for if he set out with such a determination, he will most certainly live beyond it ; but I would recommend every man who has enough for himself and for those who may come after him, to spend very nearly his whole income. We are but stewards, my dear Harry ! we are but stewards ! and we are bound to dispense the good things that are intrusted to us.”

“And yet I have both heard you cry out against luxury,” replied Burrel, “and declare that indiscriminate gifts of money did more harm than good.”

“True, true !” replied Dr Wilton. “I have done all that you say. But there are thousands of eligible ways in this world by which a man may discharge that duty to society imposed

upon him by a large fortune, without injuring his own mind, or enervating his own body by luxury. How much may be done to promote the instruction of youth, to furnish employment for the poor and industrious, to encourage arts and sciences, to reward the manufacturer even for his toil and skill, and the merchant for his risk and enterprise, without being the least luxurious in one's own person. Ximenes walked through halls tapestried with purple and gold, and yet lay down upon a bed of straw. Fie, Harry, fie ! It is a shame for any rich man to accumulate more wealth while there is a poor man in all the land.

Burrel smiled at the lecture of his old tutor ; not indeed because he undervalued his precepts, but because he evidently saw that the lapse of ten years had been skipped over in the good doctor's mind, and that he himself stood there as much the pupil in the eyes of Dr Wilton, as ever he had been in his days of boyhood.

“ Well, well, my dear sir ! ” he answered ; “ as some compensation for my negligence hitherto, I think I shall find a means of spending this

twenty-five thousand pounds in such a manner as even your severe philosophy will approve."

"Ah, Harry! I see you are laughing at your old pedagogue," said his friend. "But never mind; if worthy Dominie Sampson—a character I revere and love, although the dolts on the stage have degraded him into a buffoon—If worthy Dominie Sampson boasted of having taught little Harry Bertram the rudiments of erudition, I will boast of having taught you, Harry Burrel, the rudiments of virtue—So mind what you do; for every action you perform is my pride or my shame."

"Then I will try to make you a proud man," replied Burrel. "But I must now leave you, my dear sir, and seek this money-lender, if you will direct me thither."

"Well, well, whatever be your purpose, take care what you are about with him!" answered the doctor. "He is a wily knave. But I shall see you again, ere you leave the country—which, if I judge right, will not be soon"—and he fixed a gay glance upon Burrel's face, which fully repaid the smile he had remarked—"Remember,

Harry," he added, "I am to speak the blessing."

Burrel laughed, and shook Dr Wilton's hand, and the worthy rector, conducting him to the door at which his horse stood prepared, pointed out the direct road to Ryebury, which lay straight across the country, at about six or seven miles distance.

Harding, at the same time, received orders to convey the little baggage he had brought with him back to Emberton, and, that personage internally congratulating himself, with the words, "All is right!" as he heard Dr Wilton direct his master on the road to the miser's dwelling, proceeded calmly to lay out his plans for that which he considered as his *coup de maitre*.

Burrel had no difficulty in finding his way; and at about eleven o'clock he was standing before Mr Tims's slate-coloured door, enduring the reconnoissance which master and maid always inflicted on those who visited their dwelling. At length Sally appeared, and Mr Burrel was ushered into Mr Tims's parlour, where the miser received him with as much cordiality as was in his nature, having from one accidental circumstance acquired a particular regard for his

present visiter—a fact in natural history which perhaps requires some explanation.

The simple truth, then, was merely this. On Burrel's first visit, the miser, knowing him to be a man of large fortune, whom it might be well to conciliate, had offered him a glass of ale ; and then even went the length of offering a glass of wine. Doing it—like most generous people—with fear and trembling lest it should be accepted, he was inexpressibly relieved by Burrel's declining both the expensive kinds of refreshments that he offered. The matter sunk deep into his mind, and at once created a fund of esteem and gratitude towards the self-denying stranger, which was only augmented by the consciousness that he himself always ate and drank that which was offered to him at other houses, looking upon it all as a saving.

On the present occasion, as soon as Burrel entered, he again made the offer of the ale, and would fain have offered the wine also—but there was something within him which this time rendered it impossible. So much was he of opinion, that the wine is the best which is drank at other

people's expense, that he could not believe it possible that Burrel would refuse it twice. While this struggle was going on in his bosom, however, Burrel, who saw that he was somewhat agitated, and never took into consideration the important question regarding the glass of wine, imagined that Mr Tims felt ashamed of not having given him intimation of the state of Sir Sidney Delaware's affairs, and proceeded to speak of them at once.

"You have done wrong, my good sir!" he said, "in not letting me know that the money required for redeeming the annuity is to be produced so soon. You did not consider that a day or two's notice may be necessary, in transactions to such an amount. However, it so luckily happens that the money is ready!"

"But, my dear sir—my dear sir!" cried Mr Tims, "How could I give you notice when you were out of the way. I called upon you twice, at no small expense of shoe-leather."

Such indeed was the fact—that is to say, that he had called—and as the internal economy of Mr Tims's heart is not unworthy of investigation,

as a curious piece of hydraulick machinery, it may be well to state what were the contending feelings which made the miser, at last, act contrary to the directions of his dearly-beloved nephew. In the first place then, it would appear, that in regard to the arrangements for the redemption of the annuity, a liberal commission had been insured to him on the completion of the transaction, and consequently he was a party interested. The injunctions, therefore, of his nephew, to throw every quiet impediment in the way, to keep Mr Burrel in ignorance of the facts, and, if any thing should retard the remittances which that gentleman expected, to refuse all assistance, were clearly contrary to the general principles on which Mr Tims acted, namely, direct views of self-interest. To correct all this, Lord Ashborough's lawyer had held out the prospect of his patron's friendship on the one hand, and his wrath on the other, and had added many vague promises of more golden rewards, to be procured by his nepotal influence. But Mr Peter Tims, although he had very little family affection himself, forgot that his uncle possessed as little ;

and though the only tie between Mr Tims, senior, and the rest of the world, existed in his nephew's person, yet the miser of Ryebury felt that he could never be without friends or relations, as long as there were pounds, shillings, and pence in the world. Mr Tims, junior, as I have said, forgot all this, and forgot too, that his uncle would be, perhaps, less inclined to receive vague promises of compensation as current coin, from him, than from any other individual; and, at the same time, in order to show him how deeply Lord Ashborough was interested, and how much it would behove him to reward the conduct he pointed out, the lawyer committed the egregious blunder of letting the miser know who the pretended Mr Burrel really was.

The desire of making his own bargain instantly seized upon Mr Tims of Ryebury, and he at once wrote to Mr Tims, of Clement's Inn, with a puzzling question, as to what was to be the specific *consideration* for acting in the manner prescribed. The reply was not so definite as he liked, and he immediately called at Mr Burrel's

lodging to inform him of the time appointed for the payment of the redemption money. His calculations at the same time were partly true, and partly incorrect, in regard to the probable advantages to be gained by courting Burrel.—No man ever did, or ever will, make a correct calculation, where self is one of the units. He is sure, by adding a cipher to it, to multiply it by ten, in every shape and way, and thus throw the whole computation wrong together. Mr Burrel, or rather Mr Beauchamp, was heir to Lord Ashborough's title and estates, and likely to outlive him by forty years ; and therefore, thought Mr Tims, is likely to patronize me a thousand-fold more than Lord Ashborough can. But Mr Tims forgot that if Henry Beauchamp was likely to outlive Lord Ashborough, Lord Ashborough was fully as likely to outlive Mr Tims.

These considerations, however, gave the miser a great leaning towards Mr Burrel, in the whole business, though he was not without some speculations, in regard to catching all that he could from both parties, if a way were to present itself.

At present, he assured his visiter that he had called upon him twice for the express purpose of communicating with him on the subject of Sir Sidney Delaware's affairs; but that, not having found him at home, he did not think fit to leave any message, on so momentous a subject, with either the woman of the house or the groom, who were the only personages he saw.

“ Well, well, Sir !” replied Burrel. “ The question now before us is simply, how we are now to proceed ? Must I go to London to receive this money, and bring it down ?”

“ Why, I should think that would be an expensive way, sir,” replied the miser. “ Forty shillings going and forty shillings coming, and eighteenpence to the coachman each way, makes four pound three ; and then you may well calculate three shillings more for food and extras going and coming, making four pounds six. Then you would not like to carry such a sum about you ; so that you would be obliged to do it by draft, therefore the stamp would not be

saved ; and I am always for saving the money of my clients—it is the duty of an honest man—No, no, sir ! I think you had better draw a letter of credit, in my favour, on your agents, and I will direct them to lodge the money in the hands of the London correspondents of our county bank, of which I am one of the poorest proprietors. I will give you an acknowledgement in form for the letter of credit, which, being duly satisfied, I will give you a receipt in full, with a lean upon the mortgage from Sir Sidney Delaware, as I settled before with Messrs Steelyard and Wilkinson.”

“ But can all this be done in time, Mr Tims ? ” demanded Burrel.

“ Oh, no fear, no fear ! ” replied the miser. “ This is but the twenty-first. We can get the letter off to-day. The bills given by Sir Sidney do not come due till the twenty-fourth ; and we can easily have notice of the money being lodged by the twenty-third in the afternoon, when the post comes in.”

Burrel mused a moment. He saw no objec-

tion ; but yet he thought it might be safer to go himself. He mused again ; but then he thought of Blanche Delaware, and that he had not seen her for two whole days—That settled the matter in his mind. There could be no possible obstacle, he persuaded himself, in London—therefore, neither pleasure or necessity called him thither : one of those two great motives chained him to Emberton, and therefore he determined to stay.

The miser agreed immediately to join him at his lodgings in the little town, where all that was necessary for completing the business was to be procured more easily. Burrel rode off ; Mr Tims reached Emberton in half an hour ; the letter was drawn ; another written by Mr Tims to his London bankers ; the whole were put in the post ; and Burrel, after dining alone, sauntered slowly and happily up the park, to take his tea in the little octagon parlour of Emberton house.

He was received with those sparkling eyes which left no doubt that he was welcome ; the next day also past in happiness ; and Burrel, somewhat too sure perhaps of success, fixed in his

own mind, as he strolled homeward, that the morning which saw Sir Sidney Delaware freed from a part of his difficulties by his exertions, should also see the declaration of his love to her who had inspired it.

CHAPTER II.

ON the twenty-third day of September, Sir Sidney Delaware had some slight symptoms of a fit of gout, which rendered him somewhat irritable and anxious. Three times did he give particular directions, that, when Mr Tims of Ryebury came, he was to be shown into the library, and, as often when he heard any unusual sound in the mansion, usually so still and tranquil, he demanded whether Mr Tims had arrived. Still Mr Tims did not make his appearance, though about two o'clock Mr Burrel did; and the worthy baronet, in conversation with his young friend, forgot his anxiety for a time. At length, however, it began to resume its ascendancy, and its first struggle was of course with politeness. He was evidently uneasy;

he moved to and fro in his chair ; he complained of some pain ; and, at length, was in the very act of desiring his son to take a walk, and see why Mr Tims had not kept his promise, when the daily bag arrived from the post, and—together with a billet or two, apparently from some female friends for Miss Delaware, which she carried away to her own room ; and a letter for Captain Delaware—appeared a lawyer-like epistle addressed to Sir Sidney, and bearing the London postmark.

“ I will go to Mr Tims as soon as I have looked over this letter, sir,” said Captain Delaware ; but Sir Sidney at the same moment opened his own, and, after he had read, he exclaimed, “ No, no, William, there is no necessity ! You and Blanche were going to walk with Mr Burrel ; and here Lord Ashborough’s lawyer tells me that he cannot be down on the precise day—that is to-morrow—but will come the day after, or the day after that, with a thousand apologies for not coming. If I be well enough, I will go to this person, Tims, myself to-morrow. If not, you can go. So call Blanche, and take your ramble while it is fine. The clouds are beginning to gather.”

Captain Delaware went to seek his sister, who, as we have said, had retired to her own apartment; but he soon returned saying, that she had a slight headach, and would stay at home. He would show Burrel the way himself, he added, to what the people called the Sea Hill, so named because the sea was thence first visible; and, though the spirit of their proposed expedition had all evaporated, Burrel did not choose to decline. “If she did but know!” he thought; “If she did but know what is going on here in my heart, I do not think a slight headach would keep her at home! But I must bring this matter to some certainty—it is growing painful!” and more than one-half of his walk passed in silent musing.

On his return, he went into the library with Captain Delaware. Blanche was there with her father, but she was deadly pale, and Burrel felt more than anxious—alarmed. As soon almost as he entered, Sir Sidney Delaware pressed him to stay to dinner, and Burrel, who had often declined, mastered by strong anxiety, agreed to do so on the present occasion; though, as the invitation was given and accepted, he saw a passing blush,

and then a relapse to snowy paleness, come over the countenance of her he loved.

The evening was no longer one of joy. Burrel hoped that some opportunity would present itself of gaining a single moment of private conversation with Blanche Delaware in the course of his stay ; but it was evident that she avoided every thing of the kind, and, at an early hour, complaining of increased headach, she retired once more to her room. Soon after, her lover took his leave, and returned home in a state of feverish anxiety, difficult to be described ; while Captain Delaware perceived that something had gone wrong, but could not divine what ; and Sir Sidney, without seeing any thing deeper, felt that the evening which had just past to its predecessors, was the dullest he had spent since he had become acquainted with Henry Burrel.

To Burrel the night went by in sleepless restlessness ; and, though we would fain see how it flew with Blanche Delaware, we must take up her story in the course of the morning after, when, rising as pale as the night before, she found that the hour, instead of nine—which she had fancied it must be at least—was only seven. Putting on

her bonnet, she glided down the old stone staircase, and proceeded into the park; but it was not towards Emberton that she took her way. On the contrary, turning her steps through the wild woodlands that lay at the back of the mansion, she trod very nearly the same path which she had pursued with Henry Burrel during the first days of their acquaintance.

She traced the walk by the bank of the stream. The kingfishers were flitting over the bosom of the river; the waters were pouring on, fretting at the same pebbles, dashing over the same little falls, lying quiet in the same still pools, as when she had last seen them. But the feelings of her heart were changed, and the light, which nature had then borrowed from joy, was now all overshadowed by the clouds of care. As she gazed upon the stream, and the wild banks, and the hawthorn dingles round her, and felt that a bitter change in her own bosom had stripped them of all their beauties, as ruthlessly as the hand of winter itself could have done, the pain was too much, and she wept.

Still she trod her way onward, pondering slowly

and gloomily, till she came so near the little glen that had terminated that happy walk with Burrel, that she could not refrain from going on. A few minutes brought her to the spot where the Prior's Well was first visible, and a few minutes more found her standing under the rich carved canopy of gray stone that covered over the fountain.

For several moments she gazed wistfully and mournfully upon the waters, as, with a calm unobtrusive ripple, and a low whispering murmur, they welled from the basin of the fountain, and trickled through the grass and pebbles. "Oh, would to Heaven!" she thought, "that yon calm water did really possess the mysterious power the old legends attribute to it. But two days since, nothing on earth would have made me taste it, though I believed not a word; and now I am almost tempted to drink, though I still believe as little."

As she thought thus, she stretched out her hand to the little iron cup; and, after a short pause, filled it, and gazed upon the water, as it lay pure and clear, with that peculiar cold sparkling limpidity which the old monks so greatly prized in their

wells. Her hand shook a little ; but, after a single instant's consideration, with a smile which was mingled of sadness and of a sort of gentle scorn, at the drop of credulity that still lay at the bottom of her heart, she was raising the cup to her lips when a hand was laid gently upon her arm.

She started, but without dropping the cup, and, turning round, she saw beside her, Henry Burrel. Pouring the water carefully back into the font, as if every drop were precious, she let go the chain, while, with downcast eyes, and a cheek burning like crimson, she uttered a scarcely audible good-morrow, in answer to some words that she had hardly heard.

Burrel's hand still rested on her arm, while his eyes were fixed upon her face, tenderly, but reproachfully. The action and the look were those of intimacy, but not of presumption ; and, indeed, there had been of late a kind of mute language established between Blanche and her lover, in which many a question had been asked, and many a feeling had been acknowledged, which would have expired in shame, had words been the only

means of expression, and which gave Burrel some right to enquire into the change he could not but perceive too plainly.

“ You were about to drink, Miss Delaware !” he said. “ But if you taste of the enchanted fountain, I must drink also ; for Heaven knows, then, I shall have more need of the waters of oblivion than you have !”

He spoke with a smile ; but there are smiles in the world more melancholy than a world of sighs ; and his was so full of pain, anxiety, and disappointment, that Blanche, as she turned away, made the only answer in her power—by tears. The drops from her eyes fell thick, and as her left hand rested on the little carved border of the stone font, over which her head still hung, partially averted to hide the deep and varying feelings that passed across her face, the tears dimpled the clear still waters ; and though Burrel, as he stood, could not see her eyes, he perceived that she was weeping bitterly. His fingers, which had rested lightly on her arm to prevent her from drinking the water, now glided

down and circled round her hand, clasping upon it with a degree of gentle firmness.

“Miss Delaware,” he said, “for Heaven’s sake, tell me have my hopes been all in vain?—Have I, like a presumptuous fool, dreamed of happiness far greater than I deserve to possess? And do you now, by the striking change which your demeanour towards me has undergone, intend to rebuke my boldness in fancying that you might ever become mine; and to crush the hopes which your former kindness inspired?”

Blanche Delaware wept, but she answered not a word; and Burrel gazed on her for a moment in silence, in a state of agitation which might have well prevented him from judging sanely of what was passing in her mind, even had it been expressed by more unequivocal signs than the bitter, though silent tears, that rolled over her cheeks.

“For God’s sake, speak!” he exclaimed at length. “Oh, Blanche! if you did but know the agony you are inflicting on a heart that loves you better than any other earthly thing, you

would at least save me the torment of suspense—
May I—dare I—hope that you will be mine?”

Blanche Delaware passed her hand across her brow, and brushed back the rich long ringlets, that, as she stooped, had fallen partially over her eyes. She turned towards her lover also, still grasping the edge of the fountain with her left hand for support, and, with something between a gasp and a sob, replied to his question at once—“No, Mr Burrel! No! You must not hope!—Oh, forgive me!”—she added, seeing the deadly paleness that spread over his countenance. “Forgive me! Forgive me! But for your sake—for your own sake—for both our sakes, it is better said at once—I must not—I cannot”——

The rest died upon her lips. Enough, however, had been spoken to make the rejection decisive; and yet it was spoken in such a tone as to betray deep grief as well as agitation on her own part; and to awaken—not suspicions—but a thousand vague and whirling fancies in Burrel’s brain.

“And will not Miss Delaware,” he said at length, “at least console me for broken hopes, and the first love of my heart crushed for ever, by assigning some cause for this change in her opinion of one, who is unconscious of having done any thing to offend or pain her?”

Blanche was again silent, and turned away her head, while the sighs came thick and deep, and the tears were evidently falling fast. Burrel paused for a moment, and then added, in a sad but kindly tone—“Or is it, Miss Delaware, that I have imagined a heart free, that was before engaged? Perhaps, long ere I knew you, some more fortunate person may have created an interest which can be inspired but once—perhaps even, circumstances may have prevented you from rendering him as happy as you might otherwise have done—Oh, tell me, is it so? For though all men are selfish, I should find it easy to gratify my selfishness in contributing to your happiness. I have interest—I have power—and if I could render Blanche Delaware happy with one that she loves, it would be the next blessing to pos-

sessing her hand myself—Tell me, Miss Delaware, I beseech you, is it as I imagine ?”

“ Oh ! No, no, no ! cried Blanche, turning her glowing face towards him. No, upon my word—I never saw the man that I could love but”——

The deepening blush and the fresh burst of tears concluded the sentence as Burrel’s heart could have desired ; and again laying his hand upon hers, he besought her to tell him what then was the obstacle. But Blanche drew back—not offended, but sad and determined.

“ It is in vain, Mr Burrel !” she said ; “ and I am bound to tell you so at once. My mind is made up—my resolution is taken. You have my highest esteem, my deepest gratitude, my most sincere regard, but you cannot have”——

She paused at the word love ; for no circumstances to the mind of Blanche Delaware could palliate a falsehood, and she felt too bitterly that he did possess her love also. She changed the phrase in the midst, and added, “ I can never give you my hand !”

One only glance at the countenance of her lover made her feel that she could bear no more, and that it were better for them both to part at once. She drew back a single step, and then, with a look of painful earnestness, while her hand unconsciously was laid upon his arm, she said, in a low sad tone, "Forgive me, Mr Burrel! Oh, forgive me!" and the next moment Burrel was standing alone by the side of the fountain.

He remained there for several minutes, with every painful feeling that it is possible to imagine struggling together in his bosom. First, there was the disappointment of hopes that he had encouraged to a pitch, of which he had had no notion, till they were done away for ever—the breaking of a thousand sweet dreams—the vanishing of a crowd of happy images—the dissolution of all the fairy fabric which the enchanter Fancy builds up round the cradle of young affection. Then there were the doubts, the fears, the jealousies, the vague and sombre imaginings, to which the unexplained and extraordinary conduct of her that he loved gave rise; and then, again, was the rankling sting of mortified pride, shooting its

venom into the wound inflicted by disappointment.

Burrel paused by the fountain, and suffered every painful thought to work its will upon his heart in turn ; and, oh ! what he would have given to have wept like a woman ; but he could not. At length, steeling himself with that bitter fortitude which is akin to despair, he turned his steps towards the little town. He avoided, of course, the mansion ; and, though he gazed at it for a moment with a bent brow and quivering lip, when he caught a sight of it from a distance, yet, as soon as he withdrew his eyes, the sight only seemed to accelerate his pace.

“ Have my horse at the door in a quarter of an hour ! ” were the first words he addressed to his servant, as he entered the house ; “ and be ready to take up the baggage to London by the coach.”

Harding gazed upon his master in horror and astonishment ; for the newly-proposed arrangement did not at all coincide with his views and purposes. But Burrel, having given his orders in a tone that left no room for reply, walked

on into the little parlour ; and it was several minutes before his worthy valet could so far recover from the shock, as to find an excuse for evading the execution of his commands. He soon, however, summoned sufficient obstacles to his aid ; and, having proceeded to order his master's horse, he returned and entered the parlour uncalled.

“ I have ordered the groom to bring up Martindale, sir,” he said, “ because the bay needs shoeing. But I am afraid, sir, I cannot get all the things ready for the coach. There is every thing to pack, sir, and all the bills to be paid, and not above three quarters of an hour to do it in.”

Burrel had been gazing forth from the window, seeing nothing upon earth ; but his habitual command over himself, was too powerful to suffer him to get deaf as well as blind, under any disappointment ; and he turned immediately that the servant spoke. “ I forgot,” he said, taking out his pocket-book ; “ You must go up to-morrow morning. There is money to pay the bills ;” and he noted down as carefully as usual the sum he

gave, adding, " I shall sleep to-night at Dr Wilton's, and shall be in town on Saturday. Have the travelling chariot taken to Holditch, to be put in order, as soon as you arrive. Call in all my bills in London ; and get things arranged to set off for the continent in the course of next week."

The man bowed low, with his usual silent gravity ; in a few minutes more the horse was at the door ; and Burrel, riding slowly out of the town, took the road towards the house of his former tutor.

CHAPTER III.

“HUSH, Master William! hush!” cried the old housekeeper, who, having lived from ancient and better days in the family at Emberton, could never forget that William Delaware had been once a boy, nor ever remember that he was now a man. “Hush, Master William! Miss Blanche is not well, poor dear—not well at all; and, indeed, I think——But there he goes!” and as she spoke, Captain Delaware, who had been calling loudly to his sister to come down and make breakfast for him, as he was in haste, hurried into the breakfast-parlour to perform that office for himself. It was not, indeed, that William Delaware was in the least indifferent to his sister’s

health or happiness, but he possessed that sort of constitution, which hardly permits one to understand what sickness is ; and although, had he known that Blanche was suffering under aught that he could assuage or even sympathize with, he would have hastened to offer comfort and consolation, with every feeling of fraternal affection, he now only muttered to himself, “ Oh, she has got one of those cursed headaches ! ” and proceeded to spoon the tea into the tea-pot, as if he had been baling a leaky boat. “ Blanche has got a headach, and is not coming down,” he added, as Sir Sidney Delaware entered ; “ and I have made tea, because I wish to reach Ryebury, and speak with the old miser before he goes out. The fellow must be shuffling.”

Sir Sydney expressed his anxiety at the continuance of Blanche’s headach, more strongly than his son had done. His eyes had been less quick than those of Captain Delaware, in seeing the growing love between Burrel and his daughter, for such feelings had long before passed away from his own bosom ; but his personal experience of sickness had taught him to sympathize with it

far more than his son could do, and he was about to visit Blanche's chamber immediately, had not the business of Mr Tims first attracted him for a moment, and then detained him till breakfast was over, and his son was about to depart.

With manifold directions to express surprise at the miser's want of punctuality, Captain Delaware was dismissed by his father, and took the way direct to Ryebury, fully determined to enforce Sir Sidney's rebuke, with many more indignant expressions. "Here," he thought, "my father might have been pressed severely by this time—insulted—nay, even arrested—because this scoundrel has not thought fit to produce the money—doubtless, keeping it to get the additional interest of a single day. If it were not for creating new obstacles, I would horsewhip him for his pains!"

William Delaware was naturally quite sufficiently hasty in his disposition; but people who are so, have not unfrequently a way of lashing themselves up into anger before there is any necessity for it, by conjuring up a thousand imaginary injuries or insults in the future, as soon as they

have begun to suspect that Mr A, B, C, or D, intends to offend or wrong them. Thus, it must be confessed, did William Delaware, as he walked along towards the house of the miser. First, he thought that Mr Tims might strive still to delay the payment he had promised, in order to increase his gains by a day or two more interest—next, he imagined that he might wish to prolong the matter, in order to augment Sir Sidney Delaware's difficulties, and exact a higher commission ; and then, again, it struck him that the miser, whose repute for double-dealing was rather high in the neighbourhood, might have in view so to entangle the affairs of the family, as to get possession of the estate itself. Notwithstanding all this, it is true that William Delaware was not of a suspicious nature. All these phantoms were conjured up by anger at the foregone disappointment. A very slight circumstance—the delay of the payment—had raised them ; and a less—even a few fair speeches—would have dispelled them. The distinction is necessary to the appreciation of his character. He was hasty in all his conclusions—rapid in his expectations

of good or evil, as soon as his mind was set upon either track—but not suspicious; and, consequently, easily turned from the one road into the other.

It so happened, however—unfortunately enough—that while in the very height of his indignation at Mr Tims, with that personage's evil deeds and qualities—real and imaginary—past, present, or future—all red-hot and hissing in his mind, who should he encounter but the miser himself, with his sharp red nose turned towards Emberton, and his hands behind his back. Mr Tims saw him instantly; and as there were various questions which he was anxious to have settled and resolved before he entered into any discussion with either Sir Sidney or his son, he thought that he might escape by a side-path, which opportunely lay just at his left hand; and, consequently, making a rotatory movement on his right heel, he was turning in amongst the bushes, when he was arrested by the voice of the young officer, addressing him in not the most placable tones in the world. As Mr Tims was well aware, that amongst the *stadio-dromoi*, he could not compete

with so young an opponent as Captain Delaware, he instantly turned and met that gentleman, whose previous wrath was not a little heightened by this evident attempt at evasion.

The most difficult thing for a man who has been secretly coaxing his own anger, is to begin to give it vent without appearing unreasonable ; and Mr Tims's countenance was so cold, dry, and calm, that nothing could be made out of the " Good-morning, Captain Delaware !" with which he opened the conversation.

" I thought, sir, that by making my visit so early, I should have found you at home," was Captain Delaware's brief rejoinder.

" Business called me abroad," replied Mr Tims, as laconically.

" Were you going towards Emberton Park ?" demanded the young officer.

" No, sir, I was not !" answered Mr Tims, whose manner towards the son of " poor Sir Sidney Delaware," was always very different from that which he assumed to rich Mr Burrel, and was peculiarly simple on the present occasion.

" You were not !" cried Captain Delaware,

“ then, let me tell you, sir, you should have been there yesterday. I beg to know, sir, why you were not to the time you yourself appointed for the signature of the mortgage, and the payment of the money advanced.”

“ Because it was not convenient, sir, and because the money was not ready,” replied Mr Tims with imperturbable calmness.

Captain Delaware’s command over himself abandoned him ; and, raising the whip he had in hand, he shook it over the miser’s head, exclaiming, “ Not convenient ! Not ready ! By Heaven, if it were not for your years, I would make you find it convenient to keep your word when you have pledged it, and to be ready at the time you promise !”

He was dropping the whip, though his eyes were still flashing, when a voice close beside him, proceeding from an honest neighbouring farmer, whose approach he had not observed, exclaimed, “ Captain, Captain ! Don’t ye strike the old man ! Don’t ye, now ! Don’t ye ! Oh, that’s right, now—reason it with him, like—but don’t ye strike him !”

“ No, no, Retson, I am not going to strike him !” replied Captain Delaware. “ Go on, my good fellow, and leave us—I will not strike him !”

“ Well, well, Captain,” said the farmer, laughing, “ I’ll go—but your word’s given, mind.—So, don’t ye strike the old man, though he were the devil himself,—He looks more like a wet hen under a penthouse, howsomever.”

The farmer’s description was not far from correct ; for Mr Tims—who had expected no such fierce explosion as that which his words had occasioned, and had fancied he could be insolent in security—now stood aghast as the rhetoric of Captain Delaware’s horsewhip seemed likely to be applied to his shoulders. His knees acquired an additional bend, his nether jaw dropped, his arms hung distant from his sides, his cheeks grew paler, and his red nose stood out in prominent relief, under the very act of fear. The good farmer’s interposition, however, calmed him sufficiently to enable his tongue to falter forth some words of apology, declaring that he did not intend to offend Captain Dela-

ware—far from it ; but how could that gentleman expect him to speak boldly upon such subjects, out in the public high-road ? Who could tell, he demanded, that there might not be robbers in the immediate neighbourhood of the place where they then stood ?

“ Well, if that be all,” answered Captain Delaware, “ I will protect you against robbers, till you get to your own house ; and there you will be sufficiently at ease to give me a proper explanation of your unaccountable conduct.”

Mr Tims would fain have evaded this immediate consummation ; as his purpose in walking to Emberton was to see Mr Burrel, and ascertain exactly which way would be the most advantageous for him to act ; but Captain Delaware was peremptory ; the mediating farmer had walked up the lane, and Mr Tims was obliged to turn his steps homeward. When he had entered the house, and led his unwelcome visiter into his little parlour, carefully closed the door, and listened to hear that the steps of even his faithful dirty Sally no longer haunted the passage, he began his explanation in a low tone.

“ As you say, Captain Delaware—as you say, indeed,” he went on. “ It is a most unfortunate circumstance ; but how can I help it ? I depended upon another for the money—the letter of credit that he gave for the sum was duly presented ; but it appears that a bill for ten thousand pounds, which he expected to be paid by this time, had been dishonoured, and that his agents had not sufficient assets to meet the demand. But as you say, sir, it was impossible that I could help it.”

Captain Delaware sat for a moment in silent but bitter disappointment. At length he exclaimed, “ And who the devil is this gentleman, from whom you were to receive this money ? ”

Mr Tims hesitated. “ Why, as to that, Captain Delaware,” he said, “ I was expressly forbidden to tell ; but since the matter has come to this pass, I dare say there can be no harm in it. He is no one else than the gentleman calling himself Mr Burrel, or, in other words, your cousin, Mr Henry Beauchamp.”

William Delaware started off his chair, as any other quick-blooded person would have done,

if such a tide of sudden and unexpected information were poured upon him. For a moment the blood rushed up into his cheeks—the first feeling of laying one's self under a deep obligation to any one, being always painful. As long as he had thought that the miser advanced the money on mortgage, it had seemed a mere matter of traffic; but when he heard that it was Burrel, it instantly became an obligation, and the first feeling, as I have said, was not altogether pleasant. Neither was the fact, that the gay, the wealthy, the dashing, the sarcastic cousin, of whom he had heard so much, had—notwithstanding the chilling coldness with which Sir Sidney had, a year or two before, repelled some advances which Beauchamp had made—neither was the fact, I say, that he had opened his way into their family circle, taken a place by their fire-side, and witnessed all the poverty and decay of their house, agreeable at its first aspect. But a moment's thought—by recalling all the delicacy of Henry Beauchamp's conduct, the kind and unaffected regard which he had shown towards them all, the persevering friendship with

which he had followed up his purpose, and the real services he had so zealously planned—soon took away from the mind of William Delaware, all that was painful in the sudden news he heard, and the glow was almost at once succeeded by a bright and happy smile.

“ I see it all now !” he cried, “ I see it all now ! and since such are the facts, Mr Tims, the matter will be very easily arranged.”

“ Oh, doubtless, doubtless, sir !” replied Mr Tims. “ As you say, every one knows that Mr Beauchamp has the wherewithal to do any thing that he likes. His fortune is immense, sir ! His fortune is immense ! His father made a mint of money when he was Governor of ——.”

“ How much did you say was the deficiency ?” demanded Captain Delaware.

“ Only ten thousand pounds, sir !” replied the miser. “ A mere nothing to Mr Beauchamp ; and as you say, sir, he could raise it in a minute, if he liked. I was just going to see him upon the business, when I met you, and you were so violent, Captain Delaware.”

“ I beg your pardon, Mr Tims ! I beg your

pardon!" said the young officer. "I was in the wrong; but now I will save you the trouble you were about to take, and go on at once to my cousin myself. It is high time that I should acknowledge his generous kindness, and thank him for it."

"But, I trust, Captain Delaware—I trust," faltered forth the miser in an agony of fear, lest the job should be taken out of his hands by the meeting of the principal parties. "I trust that the business may be suffered to proceed in the regular train—I cannot be expected to lose all my little emoluments."

"Do not be afraid—do not be afraid, sir!" replied Captain Delaware, who soon saw the current of the miser's thoughts. "Do not alarm yourself. The whole business shall pass through your hands; and you shall get as much upon it as you honestly can."

"Ay, sir! Now, that is what I call something like!" replied the relieved Mr Tims. "Captain Delaware, will you take a glass of wine after your walk, or a glass of ale? But, as you say, time presses; and perhaps you

may be anxious to see your excellent and worthy cousin, who doubtless can set all right—and high time it is he should do so, I can tell you—for my worthy nephew, Mr Peter Tims, solicitor of Clement's Inn, who is agent for my good lord and former patron, the Earl of Ashborough, is to be down early to-morrow—and he is a smart practitioner, I can tell you—and the bill being out, you know”——

“The whole of course requires promptitude,” interrupted Captain Delaware. “Not that I think Lord Ashborough, or Lord Ashborough's lawyer, would act an ungentlemanly part in the business ; but I know it would go far to break my father's heart, were the bill he has given to be presented before he could pay it. So now, Mr Tims, good-morning. I will call upon you again when I have seen my cousin.”

Away sped William Delaware like an arrow from a bow, his breast full of mingled emotions, and his heart throbbing with contending feelings. He did not, it is true, reason much with himself, as he went, in regard to his position relative to Henry Beauchamp. He felt that he

owed him a deep debt of gratitude—he felt that he had every reason to love and to admire him ; and although he could not but experience likewise, a sort of generous distaste to the mere act of borrowing money from any one, yet he determined to meet his cousin frankly and openly ; for his heart had arrived at the same conclusion that his father's had reached before, and he thought, that if there were any man on earth on whom he would choose to confer the honour of accepting an obligation, it was Henry Beauchamp. He was soon in the streets of Emberton, and soon at the door of Burrel's lodging. His application for admittance was answered by the landlady, who told him that Mr Burrel was gone ; but that the valet was still there, and was settling some accounts with a gentleman in his own room.

“ Gone !” cried Captain Delaware. “ Gone ! You mean gone out, Mrs Wilson, surely—but, send the servant to me.”

“ Oh no, sir ! Sorry I am to say, he is gone for good and all, too surely,” replied Mrs Wilson. “ But if you will walk into the parlour, Captain,

I will send Mr Harding to you directly—and I hope, if you should chance to hear of any good lodger, Captain, you will not forget me.”

“ No, no !” replied Captain Delaware, somewhat impatiently, as he walked forward into the little parlour which Burrel had inhabited ; “ but make haste, Mrs Wilson, and send the man to me directly. What can be the meaning of all this ?” he added, as the good woman shut the door. “ Phoo ! There must be some mistake,” and he walked towards the window which looked out into the road. Two minutes after he had taken up that position, steps sounded along the passage, and, the street door being opened, Burrel’s servant, Harding, ushered out a coarse, vulgar man, whom, as we have described him before, when he made his appearance in the stage-coach with Burrel, we shall not notice farther on the present occasion. A few brief words, which Captain Delaware neither could nor would hear, concluded that worthy’s conversation with Mr Beauchamp’s servant ; and the next moment Harding himself made his appear-

ance, and, after a silent bow, stood waiting the young officer's commands.

"Mrs Wilson must surely have been mistaken just now, in telling me that your master has left Emberton?" was Captain Delaware's abrupt address.

"No, sir; she was quite right!" replied Harding, in a respectful tone.

"Good God, this is most unfortunate!" cried Captain Delaware. "And, pray, what was the cause of his abrupt departure?"

Under ordinary circumstances, Harding would have adhered to his taciturnity; but Captain Delaware's declaration, that his master's absence was most unfortunate, excited his curiosity—not in the abstract, but personally, inasmuch as he did not know how far the unfortunate circumstance complained of might affect himself—and he therefore determined, as a nice feat of strategy, to provoke the young officer's loquacity, by showing that he knew or suspected more of his family concerns than the other imagined.

"I really cannot tell, sir," replied he in a low and deferential tone, "what was the abso-

lute cause ; and perhaps I might offend you, if I were to say what I fancy it was—although nobody can regret it more than I do in my humble sphere.”

“ Not at all ! Not at all ! I shall not be offended at all !” replied Captain Delaware quickly. “ On the contrary, I shall be glad to hear any cause assigned for what seems to me quite inexplicable on many accounts.”

“ Why then, sir, the fact is,” replied Harding, “ that I could not help seeing that my master—I beg your pardon, sir, I am afraid I shall offend you—Well, sir, that my master seemed to feel very differently towards my young lady at the park than I ever saw him feel before for any one ; and I naturally thought, sir, that he was not going to be a single man much longer. But then, last night, he did not come home at all at ease ; and this morning, after having been out for a long time in the park, or at the mansion, he returned as if he had got his death-blow—ordered me to get every thing ready to set off for London ; and mounting his own horse, not half an hour ago, galloped away before. So, of

course, I thought he had been refused—and that is a thing he never was in his life before, I can answer for it.”

Captain Delaware threw himself down in a chair, in a state of confusion, perplexity, and distress indescribable. He instantly combined Burrel's conduct with Blanche's illness of the previous night and that morning; and, cursing internally what he called all the silly caprices and ill-placed delicacies of womankind, he was first about to set out to accuse his poor sister of having cast away the affections of a man whom she evidently loved, and to insist upon her recalling him. Then, however, he remembered the immediate business that had brought him there, and despair took possession of him. The ten thousand pounds were not forthcoming, Burrel was gone, Lord Ashborough's agent was to be down the next morning, and William Delaware knew that the effect upon his father's mind was likely to be terrible, if the necessary sum could not be procured in time.

“Good God!” he exclaimed at length. “This is most unfortunate indeed. What is to be done?”

Do you think your master could not be overtaken ? I have business to settle with him of the utmost importance, which must be concluded to-day."

" My master left me a great many things, sir, to settle for him," replied the servant ; " and perhaps that which you speak of was amongst them. He told me to call upon Mr Tims, and"—

" That is exactly the question," cried Captain Delaware, interrupting him. " Have you got the money ?"

" What ! cried Harding, almost as eagerly. " Has the money not been paid ?"

" No, indeed !" answered Captain Delaware. " His agents declared that they had not assets—that a part of the sum—no less than ten thousand pounds—had not been paid into their hands !"

" It's a juggle !" cried the servant. " I see it all ! It is a juggle of that rogue in grain, Peter Tims—No, no, sir, my master never dreamed that the money would not be paid ; and he only ordered me to tell Mr Tims at

Ryebury, that he was to send up all papers for him to the lawyers in London, as my master talks of going abroad. But I can set all right yet, sir, I think. Mr Burrel has only gone to Dr Wilton's at present, and I know he will not be angry with me for going after him, to tell him all that has happened, and I will make bold to tell him, too, a great many things he does not know. So make your mind easy, sir. I beg your pardon for the liberty—but, depend upon it, the money shall be at Ryebury before to-morrow morning."

Captain Delaware paused a moment to think ; for there was something unpleasant to his feelings in seeming to press for Henry Beauchamp's assistance, especially as he knew not what might have passed between him and Blanche. But there was no choice but to do so, or to plunge his family into ruin ; and his meditation on the subject was brought to an end by Harding—who was a man of fine feelings himself when it suited him—declaring that he held it his bounden duty to inform his master immediately, whether Captain Delaware liked it or not.

Captain Delaware, however, reflecting that Beauchamp was his cousin, and that no other resource was open to him, did not oppose the man's determination ; and it being settled that Harding should mount one of his master's horses, and follow him to Dr Wilton's rectory immediately, the young officer, with a mind much relieved, returned towards his paternal dwelling, meditating a severe cross-examination for Blanche, and internally declaring, " That Harding is a very honest fellow !"

CHAPTER IV.

THE very honest fellow was soon upon horse-back, muttering to himself, "Ten thousand pounds short!—that would never do!—but I must mind what I am about, else he will go back and pay the money to this young chap, and then the whole business will be spoilt. Let me see;" and he set himself seriously to consider the best means of getting Burrel either to intrust him with the money—in which case he thought he might be able to cheat his accomplice, and appropriate the whole of that part of the spoil—or to pay it at once to Mr Tims; and in that event, Harding still calculated on coming in for a share. It was yet early in the day; but, nevertheless,

Master Harding rode as if for life ; for being one of those personages who calculated *almost* every chance—the *almost* is very necessary, for he did not calculate all—he foresaw that it would be necessary for Burrel, who could not be supposed to have so large a sum about him, to procure the money from some other source, and, knowing that Messrs Steelyard and Wilkinson, his master's agents, were part proprietors of a county bank at about twenty miles distance from Emberton, he concluded that Burrel's first application would be there, where his means of payment would be best known.

The reason why things seldom answer, which are so beautifully calculated before hand, is probably, because the smallest event in the world is brought about by such a compound piece of machinery, that the most minute wheel going wrong—a pin, a pivot, a spring, a link of the chain, a cog, a catch, a lever, a balance wheel, getting the least out of place—the whole machine falls into a different train of action, and strikes six when we thought it was about to strike seven. This trite fact was beautifully exemplified in the case of Harding,

who had calculated to a word what he was to say to his master, and how soon either he himself or his said master was to set out for the bank at ———how long it would take to go, so as to arrive during banking hours—how long it would take to settle the business with the partners, and at what precise moment of time either he himself or Burrel could be back in Emberton. It so happened, however, that, on reaching the rectory, to his horror and astonishment, he found that Mr Burrel, on arriving at that place before him, had got into Dr Wilton's carriage, which had been standing at the door, and had gone out with the worthy clergyman.

How soon they would be back, no one could tell, and where they were gone to, was as little known, so that worthy Master Harding had to remain at the rectory, suffering pangs of impatience, that were not the less severe because he covered them over as usual with a face of calm indifferent gravity. Nevertheless, in order to lose no time, he immediately proceeded to the stable, and there put his master's horse in a complete state of preparation to start again at a moment's

notice, while, at the same time, he supplied the beast that brought him thither liberally with oats, feeling, like Mr Tims, a sort of Diogenesian satisfaction at feeding either his horse or himself at another person's expense. Still he was called upon to practise the copy-line virtue of patience for no inconsiderable length of time ; for, notwithstanding all his aspirations, Mr Burrel, or rather Mr Beauchamp, did not appear for at least two hours ; and the vision of the banking-house, and its speedy arrangements—the transfer of the money, and the ultimate ten thousand pounds—floated faint and more faint before his mental view. “ He’s a devil of a goer, however, that Mr Beauchamp when he has a mind ! ” thought the man, consoling himself with the usual straw-catching delusions of hope, as probability waxed weakly. “ He’s a devil of a goer when he has a mind ! No man gets over his miles sooner ; and as for Martindale, give him but easy ground, and the beast would do it well in the time without turning a hair.”

As he thus cogitated, the roll of wheels sounded past the stable ; and, on looking out, Harding saw

the plain chariot of the divine glide forward with merciful slowness to the door. The step descended with the same quiet and tranquil movement, and Henry Beauchamp, with deep and unusual gravity on his countenance, got out, and entered the house, followed by Dr Wilton.

Harding lost no time; but immediately made his arrival known to his master, and, in a private audience, informed him of Mr Tims's betrayal of his secret, and of all he had gathered from Captain Delaware, at the same time, throwing in dexterously a few of those apparently casual words which he judged most likely to prevent Mr Beauchamp from holding any direct communication with the family at Emberton. He still took care, however, to insinuate the necessity of immediately supplying the deficiency in the sum promised, and clenched the impression by directing his master's suspicions towards Lord Ashborough, and Peter Tims, Esq. of Clement's Inn, solicitor, &c. All that he dared not urge, on his own part, lest he should ruin his particular plans by the appearance of impudent intrusion, he allowed Beauchamp by implication—which

is generally a sort of semi-lie—to attribute to Captain Delaware, trusting that any want of vraisemblance would be covered by the agitation of his master's mind. In all this he was wonderfully successful; and the more so because every thing that he said was fundamentally true, and therefore Henry Beauchamp had no difficulty in believing it to be so. That gentleman, however, expressed no surprise. In fact, he had been lately troubled with a great deal more surprise than he liked; and he was returning fast to his old habit of taking every thing as a matter of indifference, or, at least, of seeming to do so. Beauchamp thought calmly for a few minutes, and then asked, "How far is it to ——?" naming the town where the county bank was situated.

"About twenty miles from Emberton, sir," replied the man; "sixteen or seventeen from this place."

"What is o'clock?" demanded his master, who, in the agitation of the preceding night, had forgotten to wind up his watch.

The man drew a fine French repeater from his pocket, and examined its face; but it lied

like himself. Hope backed him against time for ten thousand ; and though the watch was too slow by quarter of an hour, he took off ten minutes more from the hour it noted.

“ Saddle Martindale !” said Mr Beauchamp, when he had pondered the man’s reply. “ Bring him up directly ! Then go back to Emberton, and to-morrow to London, where, do as I bade you before. If you have not sent over my dressing-cases here, you need not send them— If you have—have them brought back, and take them up with the other things.”

The man bowed and withdrew ; and Burrel, after another moment’s thought, descended to Dr Wilton’s library, and informed his worthy tutor that he had received a sudden call to a different place, which compelled him to set out immediately. The cause of his departure he did not disclose, as he felt a great repugnance to make even so intimate a friend of all the parties as Dr Wilton, acquainted with the circumstances of his cousins’ difficulties, although he had not scrupled, during their drive, to inform the good clergyman, that there was no longer any proba-

bility—if there had indeed ever existed any—of an alliance between his own family and that of Sir Sidney Delaware. The cause of his different conduct, in regard to these two affairs, might perhaps be, that generosity is always taciturn where it is real—love is always loquacious where it is sure of not being laughed at.

Whether, in a longer conversation, the good doctor might or might not have seduced Beauchamp into telling him more, can hardly be ascertained ; for scarcely had he announced his intended departure, when he was informed that his horse was at the door. Dr Wilton had no time to express his surprise ; but grasping his young friend's hand, he repeated twice, “ Now mind, my dear Harry, mind ! I tell you, I am sure there is some mistake, or some very base manœuvre, and you have promised not to quit London till you hear from me.”

Beauchamp shook his head mournfully. “ It is no use, my dear sir,” he replied ; “ but, nevertheless, of course I will keep my word.”

At the door his servant, while holding the stirrup, demanded, in a peculiarly humble tone,

“ Pray, sir, may I expect to see you at Emberton to-night, for there are several things”——

“ I shall be at Ryebury, but certainly not at Emberton,” answered Beauchamp. “ If there be any thing unsettled when you come to London, it must be done afterwards.”

The man bowed low, perfectly satisfied ; and Beauchamp and his horse went off at a gallop. “ That will do it !” said Harding, as he saw his master depart ; and, mounting his own beast, he returned calmly to Emberton, calculating to a nicety, at what hour his master would have paid the money into the hands of Mr Tims.

In the mean time, Beauchamp rode on, with a light hand and an easy seat. He was one of those men who bring in their horses quite fresh, when every other horse in the field is dead beat ; and feeling confident that he could arrange the whole business and return to Ryebury before night, he did not put Martindale to the top of his speed. What was his surprise, however, on passing a village church, after an hour and a half’s riding, to find the hand of the dial—that

fatal indicator, which, in every land, has pointed out from age to age the dying moment of hopes, and wishes, and enjoyments—demonstrating, beyond a doubt, that the hour was past, and his journey of no avail.

He rode on to the town of ———, however, but the bank was shut. He enquired for the partners, but there was only one in the town, and he was nowhere to be found.

Beauchamp bit his lip, and asked himself, “What is to be done now?” Some men would have thought, that, having exerted themselves so far, they had done enough, and would have let matters take their course ; but he was not one of that class. The idea crossed his mind, indeed ; and, to use one of his own expressions, he let it strike against his heart, to see whether it would ring with the sharp, cold, brazen sound of worldly feelings ; but his heart was of a different metal, a great deal too soft to respond to such hard selfishness. “For his sake, for her sake, for all their sakes,” he thought, “I must save them from disappointment and disgrace. This Ryebury miser may very likely have the money with him,

and if not, he is, as he informed me, a proprietor in the neighbouring bank, and therefore can easily arrange the matter. I will tell him who I really am, and give him a power of attorney to sell out and pay himself."

With this resolution, he gave his horse half an hour's rest, and then turned his rein once more towards Ryebury, where, we have already seen, that the way was prepared for his purpose, by the previous knowledge of his rank and fortune, which the miser had obtained from Lord Ashborough's lawyer. As we have endeavoured to show, in the preceding pages, Henry Beauchamp had his full share of weaknesses, amongst which was a very tolerable portion of irritable pride. A certain modification of this feeling had made him determine, from the first, not to set his foot in the streets of Emberton again. That place, it is true, had likewise, in his mind, a painful association of ideas as connected with a bitter disappointment; and although he was always ready to meet such regrets boldly, if they came alone, yet as they were mingled, in this case, with mortified pride, his

resolution gave way. He was a rejected suitor—a disappointed lover. He who had fancied that his heart was proof, had been captivated by a simple country girl, had danced attendance upon her for several weeks, and had ultimately been rejected. From the words that his servant had purposely let fall, he felt sure that the whole town of Emberton were by this time aware of his disappointment ; and if ever you have been skinned alive, reader, you may have some idea of the irritable fear which he felt of running against the rough and rasping pity, even of the insignificant animals of a country town.

Two miles, therefore, before he reached Emberton, he turned off from the high-road, and having by this time refreshed all his boyish recollections of the country round, he directed his course to a hamlet, which lay at the distance of about a mile and a half from Ryebury, and which was possessed of a little public-house, in the stable of which he could put up his horse, while he himself proceeded on foot to the dwelling of the miser. The sun was just down as he reached the hamlet ; and after having

examined, with habitual care, the accommodation for his horse, he walked out, and took his way towards Ryebury, in the midst of as splendid an evening as ever poured through the autumnal sky. A flood of rich purple was gushing from the west, with two or three soft clouds of rose colour, and gold, hanging about the verge of the sky, while all the rest was blue, "with one star looking through it, like an eye." On his right, lay the rich cultivated lands between Emberton and Ryebury; so full of tall trees, hedge-rows, masses of planting and park, that the yellow stubble fields, or the fresh ploughed fallow, could hardly be perceived amidst the warm, though withering greens of the foliage. On his left, lay a high wooded bank, above which, peered up the edge of a more distant field; and beyond it again the hills, and wide downs, that stretched away towards the sea-side, in the dim purple shadow, that covered all that part of the prospect, taking an aspect of wide and dreary solitude, very different from the gay sunshiny look the whole assumed in the daytime. Yet the scene, though full of repose,

was any thing but melancholy. The partridges were calling in the fields round about, the black-birds were flying on, from bush to bush, before the passenger, with that peculiar note, something between a twitter and song, with which they conclude their melody for the year, and some gay laughing voices in the hamlet, which he had just left behind, came mellowed by the distance, and seemed to speak of hearts at rest, and the day's labour done. As Beauchamp walked slowly on, with feelings in his bosom which harmonized indeed with the scene, but which carried all that was solemn in the aspect of the dying day into a sense of profound dejection, the light waned; and though the purple became of a still richer hue, the blue assumed also a deeper shade; the stars looked out as if to supply the place of the glory that was passing away, and the long shadows of the high grounds around, spread something more than twilight through the valley.

I wish it were possible to tell all the mingled feelings that were then to be found in the wayfarer's heart, as he walked on; and to point out how weaknesses, and virtues, and fine and gene-

rous sentiments, and human perversities, all linked arm in arm together, walked along with him on the way: how he felt that life was to him a blank—that the heart had grown old—that the bubble had burst—that the toy had lost its splendour: how he felt a pride in the very idea of serving her and hers, whose conduct had dashed the cup of happiness from his lip for ever—and how he thought that his affection might have been worthy of a higher estimation; and how he cursed his own folly, for ever suffering his heart to become the debased thing that a woman could trample upon. But his feelings were infinite, and not to be defined; for in the rainbow of the human heart, the colours and the shades are so blended together, and softened away into each other, that it is impossible to say where one ends and the other begins.

Deep thoughts are most beguiling companions. —Why wilt thou write such truisms, oh, my pen? —But deep thoughts are most beguiling companions, and Beauchamp found himself within a hundred and fifty yards of the miser's house, ere he thought that he had threaded half the

way. It was just where the path he had been following joined the little wooded lane that led from Emberton, and rose up the high bank on which the house was situated. The increasing elevation brought a little more light ; and, as Henry Beauchamp advanced, he saw a man and woman—who had been apparently walking together—part as he came near. The male figure turned hastily towards the little town ; the woman glided away in the direction of the miser's house, and was lost in the obscurity. All was again still ; but a moment after there was a low plaintive whistle, which called his attention for an instant. He heard it again, but at a greater distance, and thought, “ It is the curlews upon the downs ; ” and, without giving it any farther heed, he walked on, and rang the bell of Mr Tims's house, in such a manner, as to insure that his visit would not be long unknown to the inmates.

A bustle within immediately succeeded ; and, from the very highest window in the house, the head of Mr Tims himself was thrust cautiously forth, like that of a tortoise from its shell, or a

hedgehog beginning to unroll. The next moment he retreated, and his voice was heard calling from the top of the stairs to the bottom, "Don't open the door, Sarah! Don't open the door! It can be nobody on any good errand at this time of night! Don't open the door on any account!" and again he came to the window to examine once more the aspect of his nocturnal visitant.

As soon as Beauchamp perceived the black ball, which he conceived to be the crowning member of Mr Tims's person once more protruded from the flat front of the house, he raised his voice sufficiently to convey the sounds to the elevated point from which the miser was reconnoitring, and desired him to come down, and give him admission, adding, "It is I, Mr Burrel!"

"Mr Burrel!—No, no!" cried the incredulous miser. "That is not Mr Burrel's voice—No, no—I'm not to be done—Go along, sir!"

"Mr Tims," said Beauchamp, quietly, "come down to me directly. I tell you again, I am

Mr Burrel—and having heard that a part of the sum that Messrs Steelyard and Wilkinson”——

“Hush, hush !” cried the miser, now convinced. “Hush, hush !—I will come down, sir ; I will come down directly. I did not know you at first ; but I will come down in a minute. Sarah, get a light there.”—No reply.—“Sarah, get a light !” again shouted Mr Tims ; and a moment after, Sarah’s voice was heard, demanding what was the matter.

Mr Tims now speedily descended ; but, before he would admit his visiter, he again made him speak through the door, and took a view of his person by means of a little grated aperture, practised in the upper part thereof. The examination was satisfactory, and speedily bars fell and bolts were withdrawn, and Henry Beauchamp was admitted within the walls of a place, whose precautionary fastenings were exactly like those of a prison, with the only difference of being intended to keep people out, rather than to keep them in. He was instantly ushered into the invariable parlour, where, by the light of a solitary tallow candle—white and perspiring under

its efforts to give light in a warm autumn evening—he explained to Mr Tims the purpose of his visit.

Mr Tims, as we have already seen, well knew who Burrel, as he called himself, really was, even before he told him ; and he had also employed means to ascertain the amount of his property ; but, in the present instance, the prospect of deriving some usurious benefit from his companion's evident anxiety to furnish the money to Sir Sidney Delaware, forthwith made him take good care to be utterly ignorant of every thing concerning him, except that he had drawn upon his agents for a sum which they had not sufficient assets to pay.

He hummed and he hesitated for a considerable time—declared that he did not doubt that he was Mr Beauchamp ; but, nevertheless, he must remind him that he had drawn in the name of Burrel—he might be perfectly solvent ; but such things were never safe without good and sufficient security. He was quite ready to hand over to him the sum he had received from Messrs Steelyard and Wilkinson ; but as

to advancing the ten thousand pounds more, really he did not see his way in the business clearly.

Mr Beauchamp, who was not to be deceived by all this, reasoned with him for some time ; but at length he assumed another tone, and rising, took up his hat and stick.

“ Since this is the case, Mr Tims,” he said, “ the matter must be arranged otherwise. I had proposed to ride on towards London to-night in the cool ; but, as you doubt my respectability, I shall return to Emberton, and by daylight to-morrow set out for the town of —, where, you know very well, that my agents, to whom I before referred you, are part proprietors of the bank. There the matter will be done at once, and I shall be back again before Lord Ashborough’s lawyer can arrive. You will therefore be so good as to give me the money which you have already received ; we will exchange all vouchers on the subject ; and we will do without you in the farther transaction of this business.”

This plan, of course, was not that which Mr

Tims proposed to himself, and the very mention thereof at once brought him to his senses. He declared that he had no doubt of Mr Beauchamp's identity, and respectability, and solvency; and he should be very glad indeed to accommodate him; but, of course, Mr Beauchamp would not object to give him a trifling commission in addition to the ordinary interest, in order to cover the risk.

“There is no risk at all, sir!” replied Beauchamp, somewhat sharply; “and you are just as much convinced at this moment that I am the person I represent myself to be, as I am myself. However, name the commission you require; and if, when weighed against a ride of forty miles, I find it the least troublesome of the two, you shall have it.”

After undergoing a slight convulsion in his anxiety to gain all he could, and yet not to break off the negotiation, Mr Tims named the sum; and although, at another time, Henry Beauchamp would have ridden ten times the distance sooner than yield to his exaction, yet the bitter disappointment he had received that

morning, and the sort of mental lassitude that it had left, made him agree to the miser's demand, though he did it with a sneer. This, however, by no means concluded the business; for Mr Tims, calculating on the bonus promised him by Sir Sidney Delaware, proposed to pay the money over himself the next day; while Beauchamp—who, from the shuffling he observed, and a strong suspicion of some foul play on the part of his uncle's lawyer, did not choose to trust him—required that it should be immediately given into his own hands. On this point Mr Tims fought inch by inch most gallantly. First, he declared that he had not so much money in the house; next, the necessary stamps could not be procured; and lastly, when he saw that he had fairly worn his opponent out, he acknowledged that he expected a commission from Sir Sidney Delaware for raising the money; and, showing Beauchamp a letter from the baronet to that effect, he prevailed upon him to add that sum also to his note of hand for the ten thousand pounds, trusting to his own ingenuity to be able to wring it a second time from Sir Sidney

himself. As soon as this was done, there was no longer any difficulty about the money; and while Beauchamp, furnished with pen and ink, remained writing in the parlour, with every now and then passing over his countenance a sneer at himself for having yielded so tamely to the miser's exactions, Mr Tims visited some far distant part of his dwelling, and, after a considerable interval, returned with the whole of the sum required, which, thanks to the blessed invention of paper, now lay in a very small compass.

The rest of the business was soon settled, except the matter of a stamp; and as the miser—although he now frankly admitted that he knew the quondam Mr Burrel to be Henry Beauchamp, nephew and heir to Lord Ashborough—seemed not a little anxious upon this matter, alleging sagely that Mr Beauchamp might die, might be thrown from his horse and killed, *et cætera, et cætera*; his young visiter both drew up such an acknowledgement as might be afterwards stamped if necessary, and desired him to send down to Emberton for

what was farther required, promising that he himself would return in an hour and sign the document, which was still more cautiously to insure the miser against loss.

He then rose and departed—Mr Tims viewing, with that mixture of pity, wonder, and admiration, wherewith cowards regard heroes, the young gentleman issue forth into the dark night air, loaded with so large a sum, and armed with nothing but a small ash twig not thicker than his little finger. Burrel, however, like a great many other heroes, never suspected for a moment that he was in any danger, and walked on quite calmly, though he could not help noticing the same peculiar whistle which he had heard before. Nothing, however, occurred to interrupt him. A bright moon was now rising up ; and, at the distance of a little more than a mile from the miser's house, just where the lane opened out upon a wide upland field, he perceived the figure of a man coming rapidly over the rise. He himself was hid by the bushes and trees ; but, by the walk and air, he immediately recognized Captain Delaware in the per-

son who now approached. There would be no use of staying here, at the fag-end of a chapter, to analyze or scrutinize the train of feelings or of reasonings that made Beauchamp at once determine to avoid an interview. Suffice it that his resolution was instantaneous; and pushing through the hedge, near which he stood, at the cost both of gloves and hands, he walked forward on the other side of the hedgerow, while William Delaware passed him within a couple of yards' distance.

CHAPTER V.

WE must now return for a moment to the morning of that day, whose sun we have just seen go down, and to Blanche Delaware, who sat in her solitary chamber, with the world feeling all a wide lonely desert around her. Not a month before, there had not been a happier girl upon the earth. She had been contented ; she had possessed her own little round of amusements and occupations. She had music, and books, and flowers, and nature, and two beings that she dearly loved, constantly beside her, and she had never dreamed of more. The buoyancy of health, and a happy disposition, had raised her mind above the low estate to which her family had been reduced ; and a refined taste, with that noblest quality of the human mind,

which may be called the power of admiration, had taught her, like the bee, to extract sweetness and enjoyment from every flower that Heaven scattered on her way. But since that time, she had been taught another lesson—She had been taught to love ! That passion had given a splendour to the world that it had never before possessed. It had painted the flowers with richer colours—it had spread a sunshine of its own over the face of nature—it had given new soul to the music that she loved. The dream had been broken—the adventitious splendour had passed away ; but it left not the flowers, or the music, or the face of nature, as they were before. It took from them their own beauties, as well as that which it had lent them. All had withered, and died ; and the world was a desert.

She had wept long, and bitterly ; but she had dried her eyes, and bathed away the traces of her tears, when her father entered her room, and enquired tenderly after her health. “ You do not look well, indeed, my dear Blanche,” he said. “ I wish you would send to Emberton for Mr Tomkins.”

Blanche assured him, however, that it was nothing but a headach—that she would be better soon—that she was better already—and that she was just thinking of coming down stairs. There was, indeed, a sort of trembling consciousness at her heart, which made her fear, at every word, that her father was going to touch upon the subject most painful to her heart ; but she soon perceived that no suspicion had been awakened in his bosom ; and she trusted that her brother would share in her father's blindness, especially as he had been absent so long in London. In this hope, and as far as possible to remove all cause for doubt, at least, till she was able to bear an explanation, Blanche nerved her mind to restrain her feelings, and soon followed her father to the library. It was some time, as we have seen, before William Delaware returned, and Sir Sidney had walked out a little way towards Ryebury to meet him ; but as he had been since at Emberton, he came of course by a different path, and arrived alone. His mind was in no slight degree irritated and impatient, from all that had passed ; and poor

Blanche had unfortunately so far fallen under his displeasure, from the facts which the servant had communicated to him, that he was prepared, as he mentally termed it, to give her a severe scolding; but when he entered the library, he found her looking so sad and woebegone, that his heart melted; and sitting down beside her on the sofa, where she had been reading, he took her hand kindly in his, and asked her after her health, with a look full of fraternal affection. Blanche fancied that he too was deceived, and answered, that her complaint was only a head-ach, which would soon pass away.

“Are you sure, my sweet sister,” asked Captain Delaware, “that it is not a heartach, which may be long ere it leave you, if you do not take the advice of some one who has a right to counsel you?”

The blood rushed burning into Miss Delaware’s cheek, and she trembled violently; but her brother folded his arm round her waist, and still speaking gently and kindly, he went on:—
“Hear me, dearest Blanche—We have been

brought up as brother and sister seldom are—shut out the greater part of our lives from the rest of the world—loving each other dearly from the cradle—I, seeing little of mankind, except within the sphere of my own vessel; and you, seeing nothing of mankind at all. I believe that I have been the only confidant you have had from childhood, and I do not intend, dearest, that you should withdraw that confidence from me, till I put this little hand into that of the only man who ought to be your confidant from that moment.”—The tears rolled rapidly over Blanche Delaware’s cheeks.—“Although it may seem strange,” continued her brother, “that you should be expected to make a confidant of any man at all in love matters, yet, for want of a better, Blanche, you must tell me all about it; and, perhaps, I shall not make the worse depository of a secret, for being a sailor.—We are all tender-hearted, Blanche,” he added, with a smile; “at least when we are on shore. So now tell me—has Mr Burrel offered you his hand?”

Blanche was silent, though her brother waited

during more than one minute for a reply ; but the blood again mounted into her cheek, and the tears dropped thicker than before. “ Well, well,” he continued, “ if you cannot answer by words, dear sister, I must try and make out your signals, though I have not, perhaps, the most correct code myself—Burrel has offered you his hand ?” Blanche gently bent her head. It could scarcely be called an assent ; but it was enough for her brother, and he went on. “ Well, then, what was the difficulty ? He loved you, and you loved him.”

Blanche would have started up, but her brother’s arm held her firmly, and, as her only resource, she hid her glowing face upon his shoulder, and sobbed aloud. “ Nay, nay, dear girl !” he cried, “ Where is the shame or the harm of loving a man who has long loved you ? Do you think I have not seen your love, my dear sister ? And do you think that I would suffer your heart to be won, unless I knew that the man who sought it, really loved you and was worthy of you ? But tell me, Blanche, where is the difficulty—what is the obstacle ? Some trifle it

must be—I will not call it a caprice, for my sister is above that—but some idle delicacy—some over-retiring modesty, I am afraid.”

“No, no, William, I can assure you!” replied Blanche Delaware, raising her head, “I could be above all that too—but it cannot be.”

“But, my dear Blanche,” said Captain Delaware, more seriously than he had hitherto spoken—for he had endeavoured to mingle a playfulness with his tenderness. “But, my dear Blanche, you must assign some reason—at least to me. Burrel will think that we have all trifled with him. I stood virtually pledged to him for your hand, on condition that he won your love. That he must have felt he has done, or that you have been sporting with him—and such an imputation must not lie on you, nor must he think that I have deceived him.”

“Do you know who he really is?” demanded Blanche suddenly.

“Yes, Blanche, as well as you do,” replied her brother. “He is your cousin and mine, Henry Beauchamp, whom we have both played with on that carpet in our childhood.”

“It is useless, William—it is all useless!” replied Blanche, with a deep and painful sigh. But there is my father’s step in the hall—Let me go, William, if you love me—and oh, do not, for Heaven’s sake, increase his anxiety just now, by letting him know any thing of all this!—Let me go, my dear brother, I beseech you!” and struggling free, she made her escape by the door opposite to that by which Sir Sidney Delaware was just about to enter the library.

Captain Delaware had a painful task before him, in the necessity of communicating to his father, the result of the enquiries he had set out in the morning to make, although he could not find in his heart to tell him explicitly upon what doubtful chances his hope of receiving the money ere the next morning, was founded. He confined his information, therefore, as much to general terms as possible; and informed Sir Sidney that Mr Tims had not yet indeed received the money, which was to be furnished by a third party, but that he doubted not it would be paid that night, or early the next morning, before Lord Ashborough’s lawyer could arrive.

These tidings stopped any farther enquiries from Sir Sidney Delaware, though they did not satisfy or quiet his mind ; and he concluded that his son had told him all he knew, although that all but served to render him anxious and impatient. He remained restless and disturbed through the whole of the day ; raised a thousand aerial hypotheses in regard to Mr Tims's delay—drew a general picture of all misers, lawyers, and usurers, which might have ornamented the scrap-book of Eblis—and more than once threatened to visit the worthy proprietor of Ryebury himself, from which feat he was with difficulty dissuaded by his son, who, in fact, was but little less anxious than himself.

Perhaps, indeed, Captain Delaware's anxiety was the more keen and corroding, because he forced himself to conceal it, and to appear perfectly confident and careless. Blanche, on her part, avoided all communication with her brother, except that, when they met at dinner and at tea, her eyes besought him to spare her. The moments waned ; neither Mr Tims nor Burrel, nor any messenger from either, appeared

during the evening ; and, as night began to fall, Captain Delaware's impatience gradually got the better of his self-command ; and finding himself in the situation of a shell, the fuse of which was rapidly burning down to the powder, and which must consequently explode in a short time, he thought it better to carry himself away, and let his heat and disappointment reckon itself upon any other objects than his friends and relations.

As the most natural vent for such feelings, he took his way towards Ryebury ; but when he returned, after about an hour's absence, he appeared to the eyes of his sister—who strove to read his looks with no small apprehension—more heated and irritable than before.

“ Well, William, what does Mr Tims say now ?” demanded Sir Sidney Delaware, whose own anxiety had at once told him whither his son had turned his footsteps, although Captain Delaware had given no intimation of his purpose.

“ I have not seen him, sir !” was the reply. “ The old dotard would not let me in. Afraid

of *robbers*, I suppose. I rang till I was tired, and then came away. But it is no matter; the money will be forthcoming to-morrow, I have no doubt. The coach does not arrive till the afternoon; and Lord Ashborough's solicitor did not come by it to night, for I enquired at the inn."

Things which, buoyed up on the life-preserver of a light heart, float like feathers over all the waves of adversity that inundate this briny world, sink the soul down to the bottom of despair the moment that the life-preserver, dashed against some sharp rock, or beaten by some more violent surge, suffers the waters to flow in, and the fine elastic air to escape. Not many weeks before, Blanche Delaware would have wondered, in the happy contentedness of her own heart, at the anxiety and disappointment of her brother and her father, and would have looked upon the events which they seemed to regret so bitterly, but as a very small and easily borne misfortune. But in the present depression of her spirits, it overwhelmed her even more than it did them.

Her own grief was so deep, that she could not well bear any more ; and, soon after her brother's return, she retired to her chamber to weep.

The night went by, and Blanche and her father descended to the breakfast-table somewhat earlier than usual ; for care makes light sleepers.

“ Is William out ? ” demanded Sir Sidney Delaware, as he met his daughter. “ I wished to have gone to Ryebury with him.”

“ I do not think he is down yet ! ” she replied. “ I have not seen him, and yet it is odd he should be the last up to-day.”

“ Send up and see, my love ! ” said her father ; which was accordingly done, and the result was, that Captain Delaware was found just dressing. Blanche thought it very strange, that on such an occasion her brother should yield to a laziness he did not usually indulge ; but Captain Delaware seemed in no hurry to come down, and the breakfast proceeded without him. Before it was concluded, however, and before he had made his appearance, the sound of wheels coming up the avenue was heard, and a hack post-chaise drove to the door. The whole proceedings of its occu-

pants were visible from the breakfast-parlour ; and, as Sir Sidney sat, he could perceive that the first person who got out was a stout unpleasant-looking man, in whom, although greatly changed since last he saw him, he recognized Lord Ashborough's lawyer. The next that followed was evidently a clerk, and he carried in his hand one of those ominous-looking bags of green serge. Mr Peter Tims, immediately after the descent of the clerk, turned back to the chaise door, and spoke a few words to some one who remained within, and then followed the servant up the steps of the terrace.

Blanche looked at her father. He was very pale. "I wish you would call William, my love !" he said, with a faint effort to smile ; "We may want his presence in dealing with these gentlemen."

Blanche hastened to obey, and, almost as she left the room, Mr Peter Tims was announced. He entered with a low bow, but a face full of cool effrontery, which gave the lie to his profound salutation. He immediately informed Sir Sidney that he now had the pleasure of waiting upon him to settle the little business between him and his

noble client, Lord Ashborough ; and he ended by presenting the bill for twenty-five thousand pounds, which had now been due nearly two days.

Sir Sidney Delaware begged him to be seated, and then, in an embarrassed but gentlemanly manner, explained to him that the money which he had expected to receive, had not yet been paid ; but that he trusted that it would be so in the course of the day.

The face of Mr Peter Tims grew dark ; not that he did not anticipate the very words he heard, but that he thought fit to suit his looks to his actions. “ Ha ! then,” he cried, “ my lord was right, sir !—my lord was right when he said he was sure that the annuity would never be redeemed, and that the only object was to reduce the interest. But I can tell you, Sir Sidney, that such conduct will not do with us !” and he made a sign to his clerk, who instantly left the room. “ We had heard something of this yesterday, and that made me come as far as —— last night.”

Sir Sidney Delaware’s cheek grew red, and his lip quivered, but it was with anger. “ What is the meaning of this insolence, sir ?” he demanded,

in a tone that changed Mr Tims's manner at once from the voluble to the dogged. " You seem to me to forget yourself somewhat strangely !"

" Oh no, sir, no !" replied the lawyer. " All I have to say is—This, I think, is your bill—now more than due. Are you ready to take it up ? If not, I must proceed as the law directs !"

" And pray, sir, what does the law direct you to do," demanded Sir Sidney Delaware, " when the payment of a sum of money is delayed for a few hours, by some accidental circumstance ?"

" It is all very well talking, Sir Sidney !" said the man of law ; and was proceeding in the usual strain when Captain Delaware entered the room, and, passing behind his father, whispered something in the baronet's ear that made him start. Almost at the same moment, the lawyer's clerk returned, followed by one of those ill-looking fellows, who, as poor Colley Cibber declared, were " fitted by nature for doing ugly work," and, consequently, engaged by the sheriffs for that purpose.

" Which is the gemman, Mr Tims ?" cried the bailiff, for such was the personage now intro-

duced. "Is't the ould un, or the young un? for we must not be after mistaking."

"Stop a moment!" cried Captain Delaware. "Pray, who are these persons, sir?" he continued, addressing Mr Tims.

"Merely my clerk, sir, my clerk!" replied Mr Tims, who did not particularly approve the flashing of Captain Delaware's eye. "Merely my clerk, and an officer of the sheriff's court, instructed to execute a writ upon the person of Sir Sidney Delaware, at the suit of my noble lord the Earl of Ashborough. You know, Captain Delaware," he added, edging himself round the table to be out of reach of the young officer's arm; "you know, you yourself assured me that the money would be ready before the time, and now two days have elapsed, so that it is clear sir—it is clear, I say, that all this is nothing but trifling."

"Pray, Mr Tims," said Captain Delaware in a milder tone than the other expected, "answer me one question, as you are a shrewd and clever lawyer, and I want my mind set at rest."

"Certainly, sir, certainly!" replied Mr Tims; "very happy to answer any legal question, pro-

vided always, nevertheless, that it does not affect the interests of my client."

"My question is merely this, sir," answered the young officer, whose mind—both from what Burrel's servant had let fall, and from his own observations—had come to the conclusion, that the Messieurs Tims, uncle and nephew, had combined to prevent the payment of the money. "My question is merely this—Suppose two or three men were to enter into an agreement for the purpose of delaying the payment of a sum of money, in order to arrest a person on a bill they had obtained from him, would they not be subject to indictment for conspiracy?"

The countenance of Mr Tims fell ; but the moment after it kindled again with anger, and he replied, "I will answer that question in another time and place ; and, in the mean time, officer do your duty !"

"Stand back, sir !" said Captain Delaware, sternly, as the man advanced. "Mr Tims, you *shall* answer that question in another time and place, and that fully. In the mean time, as you say, be so good as to present your bill. I shall

only observe upon your conduct, that the fact of your having obtained this very writ, before you had ever presented the bill for payment, gives a strong presumption that you had taken means to prevent the money being ready, and concluded that those means had been successful."

Mr Tims turned very pale; but he was not one of those unfortunate men whose impudence abandons them at the moment of need, and he almost instantly replied, "No, sir, no! It affords no presumption. The fact is, we never thought the money would be paid. We always knew that the whole business was an artifice—that you had no honest means of coming by the money—and, after having allowed one whole day, and a part of another, to elapse, that there might be no excuse, we came prepared to make the artifice fall upon the heads of those that planned it. Officer, why do you not execute the writ?"

"Because the gemman demands you should present the bill!" replied the man.

"The bill matters nothing—the debt has been

sworn to," answered Mr Tims ; " but, that there may be no farther quibble—there—there, sir, is a bill signed by Sir Sidney Delaware for the sum of twenty-five thousand pounds, which became due the day before yesterday. Are you ready to pay it ? Can you take it up ? Are you prepared to discharge it ?"

" We are, sir !" replied Captain Delaware ; " and, when we have done so, I shall take the liberty of caning you for the words you have had the impudence to use, and the imputations you have been shameless enough to utter, till you shall have as good an action of battery against me, as I shall have an indictment for conspiracy against you."

" No, no, William !" said Sir Sidney Delaware. " There is not an instrument of castigation in the house, from the dog-whip to the stick with which the boy cudgels the jackass, that would not be disgraced by touching the back of that man or his instigator."

" First, sir, let us see the money," cried Mr Tims ; " and then let any man touch me if he

dare. The money, sir ! Where is the money, I say ?”

“ Here, sir !” replied Captain Delaware, drawing out a pocket-book. “ Here is the money that you require ; and, therefore, before proceeding to any thing else, we will terminate this business.”

It would be difficult, in that confused gabble of a thousand depraved dialects which the reviews call “ good manly English,” to express the horror and despair of Mr Peter Tims, at finding that—notwithstanding all the arts and artifices he had used, and which were a thousand-fold more in number than we have had space to put down—the money had been obtained ; and, therefore, that the patronage and business of Lord Ashborough might be looked upon as lost to him for ever.

Nothing, however, could be done ; and he was obliged to sit down and transact the receipt of the money, and all the other formal business incident to the occasion, with a bitter heart and a gloomy countenance. The notes, indeed, which Captain Delaware handed to

him, in discharge of his father's bill, he examined with scrupulous attention ; and had he been able to detect even a suspicious look about any of them, would probably have made it a plea to delay the acceptance of the payment ; but all was fair and clear ; and in half an hour the bill was paid, and Sir Sidney Delaware's estate was delivered from the burden which had kept his family in poverty for so many years. Mr Tims, indeed, took care to conduct himself with a degree of irritating insolence, intended, beyond doubt, to tempt the young officer to strike him as he had threatened, which would probably have been the case, had not Sir Sidney Delaware pointed out to his son, in a calm bitter tone, the real object of the lawyer, observing aloud, that pettifogging attorneys often made considerable sums by carrying actions of assault into a peculiar court, where the costs to the offender were very severe.

This turned the scale ; and, when the whole was concluded, the lawyer was suffered to depart, loaded with nothing but disappointment and contempt.

CHAPTER VI.

THERE are few things in life so troublesome or so tedious as the turnings back which one is often obliged to make, as one journeys along over the surface of the world ; the more especially because these turnings back happen, in an infinite proportion, oftener to the hasty and the impatient than to other men ; and that, too, on account of their very haste and impatience, which makes them cast a shoe here, or drop their whip there, or ride off and forget their spurs at the other place. But yet it is not an unpleasant sight, to see some sedate old hound, when a whole pack of reckless young dogs have overrun the scent in their eagerness, get them all gently

back again, under the sage direction of the huntsman and his whips, and with upturned nose, and tongue like a church bell, announce the recovery.

Know then, dear readers, that in our eagerness to get at the scene just depicted, we have somewhat overrun the scent, and must return, however unwillingly, to the time and circumstances, under which Henry Beauchamp left Mr Tims of Rye-bury, on the preceding night. It was, as may be remembered, fine clear autumn weather. The night, indeed, would have been dark, but for the moon, which poured a grand flood of light through the valleys, and over the plains ; and Mr Tims who loved the light—not so much because his own ways were peculiarly good, as because it is known to be a great scarer of those whose ways are more evil still—remarked with satisfaction, as he ushered his guest to the door, that it was as clear as day.

“ Sally, Sally !” he exclaimed, as soon as Mr Beauchamp was gone, “ Are all the doors and windows shut ?”

“ Lord bless me, yes !” answered the dirty

maid, shouting in return from the kitchen, like Achilles from the trenches, "As fast shut as hands can make them."

"What is that noise, then?" demanded the miser, suspiciously. "Only me putting in the lower bolt of the back-door," answered the maid.

"Oh Sally, Sally! you never will do things at the time you are bid!" cried the reproachful usurer. "I told you always to shut up at dusk. But come here, and put on your bonnet. I want you to run down to the town for a stamp."

Sally grumbled something about going out so late, and meeting impudent men in the lanes; but after a lapse of time, which the miser thought somewhat extraordinary in length, she appeared equipped for the walk, and received her master's written directions as to the stamp, or rather stamps, he wanted, and where they were to be found in Emberton. The miser then saw her to the door, locked, bolted, and barred it, after her departure, and returning to the parlour, lifted the dim and long wicked candle, bearing on its pale and sickly sides, the evidence of many a dirty thumb and finger; and then with slow,

and somewhat feeble steps, climbed, one by one, the stairs, and retired to a high apartment at the back of the house, for which he seemed to entertain a deep and reverential affection.

Well, indeed, might he love it ; for it was the temple of his divinity, the place in which his riches and his heart reposed, and which contained his every feeling. There, shrined in a safe of iron, let into the wall, were the Lares and Penates of his house, bearing either the goodly forms of golden disks—with the face of the fourth George pre-eminent on one side, and of his namesake saint all saddleless and naked, on the other—or otherwise, the forms of paper parallelograms, inscribed with cabalistic characters, implying promises to pay. Here Mr Tims sat down after having closed the door, and placed the candle on a table ; and, throwing one leg clothed in its black worsted stocking over the other, he sat in a sort of rapt and reverential trance, worshipping mammon devoutly, in the appropriate forms of vulgar and decimal fractions, interest, simple and compound.

Scarcely had he gone up stairs, however, when

a change of scene came over the lower part of his house. A door, which communicated with the steps that led down to the kitchen, moved slowly upon its hinges, and the moonlight streaming through the grated fan window, above the outer door, fell upon the form of a man emerging with a careful and noiseless step from the lower story into the passage. The beams, which were strong enough to have displayed the features of any one where this very suspicious visiter stood, now fell upon nothing like the human face divine, the countenance of the stranger being completely covered and concealed by a broad black crape, tied tightly behind his head. As soon as he had gained the passage, and stood firm in the moonlight, another form appeared, issuing from the mouth of the same narrow and somewhat steep staircase, with a face equally well concealed. A momentary conversation was then carried on in a whisper between the two, and the first apparition, looking sharply at the chinks of the several doors around, seemingly to discover whether there was any light within, replied to some question from the other, "No, no! He

is gone up stairs, to hide it in the room where she told us he kept it. Go down and tell Wat to come up, and keep guard here ; and make haste !”

The injunction was soon complied with ; and a third person being added to the party, was placed, with a pistol in his hand, between the outer door and the top of the stairs. Before he suffered his two companions to depart, however, on the errand on which they were bent, he seemed to ask two or three questions somewhat anxiously, to which the former speaker replied, “ Hurt him ! Oh, no ! do not be afraid ! Only tie him, man ! I told you before that we would not. There is never any use of doing more than utility requires. He will cry out when he is tied, of course ; but do not you budge.”

“ Very well !” answered the other, in the same low tone, and his two comrades began to ascend the stairs. Before they had taken three steps, however, the first returned again to warn their sentinel not to use his pistol but in the last necessity ; observing, that a pistol was a bad weapon, for it made too much noise. He then

resumed his way, and in a moment after was hid from his companion. The whole topography of the house seemed well known to the leader of these nocturnal visitants ; for, gliding on as noiselessly as possible, he proceeded direct towards the room where the miser sat.

Mr Tims, little misdoubting that such gentry were already in possession of his house, had remained quietly musing over his gains, somewhat uneasy, indeed, at the absence of Sally, but not much more apprehensive than the continual thoughts of his wealth caused him always to be.

He had indeed once become so incautious, in the eagerness of his contemplations, as to draw forth his large key, and open the strong iron door which covered the receptacle of his golden happiness. But, immediately reflecting that Sally was not in the house to give the alarm if any cause of apprehension arose below, he relocked the chest, and was returning to the table, when a sudden creak of the stairs, as if one of the steps had yielded a little beneath a heavy but cautious foot, roused all his fears. His cheeks and his lips grew pale ; his knees trembled ; and,

with a shaking hand, he raised the candle from the table, and advanced towards the door.

It was opened but too soon ; and, ere the unhappy miser reached it, the light fell upon a figure which left him no doubt of the purport of the visit. It was not for his life the old man feared half so much as for his treasure, in the defence of which he would have fought an universe of thieves. A blunderbuss hung over the mantle-piece, and the pully of an alarum-bell by the window, and the miser's mind vibrated for a single moment between the two. Dropping the candle almost at once, however, he sprang towards the bell, while one of the men shouted to the other near whom he passed, " Stop him ! Stop him from the bell ! By G—, he will have the whole country upon us !"

" Both sprang forward. The candle, which had blazed a moment on the floor, was trampled out, and complete darkness succeeded. Then followed a fearful noise of eager running here and there—the overthrowing of chairs and tables—the dodging round every thing that could be interposed between people animated with the active spirit of flight and pursuit—but not a word was

spoken. At length there was a stumble over something—then a heavy fall, and then a sound of struggling, as of two people rolling together where they lay. Another rushed forward, and seemed to grope about in the darkness. “D—— it, you have cut me, Stephen!” cried a low deep voice.

“Murder! Murder! Murder!” screamed another. “Oh! Oh! Oh!” and all was silent.

Two men had fallen; and another had bent down over them. But only one of those who had rolled on the floor rose up, beside the other who had been kneeling. Both remained quite still, with nothing but the monosyllable, “Hush!” uttered by either.

After a pause of several minutes, the one observed, in a low voice, “You have done him, Stephen!”

“He would have it,” replied the other. “Run down and get a light, and do not let the youngster know how it has turned out.”

“But I am all bloody!” said the other. “He will see it in a minute. Besides, you have cut my hand to the bone.”

“ Well, you stay, and I will go down ?” replied the first.

“ Not I !” was the answer. “ I’ll not stay here in the dark with him.”

“ Then go down, and do not waste more time,” said the first, somewhat sharply. “ Tell the boy, if he ask, that the old man cut your hand while you were tying him — but, at all events, make haste !”

The other obeyed, and after a long and silent interval, returned with the light. It flashed upon a ghastly spectacle. There, on the floor, at a short distance from the bell-rope, which he had been endeavouring to reach, lay the figure of the unhappy miser in the midst of a pool of gore, which was still flowing slowly from two deep gashes in his throat. His mouth was open, and seemed in the very act of gasping. His eyes were unclosed and turned up, with a cold dull meaningless stare ; and his gray hair, long, lank, and untrimmed, lay upon his ashy cheeks, dabbled with his own blood. By his side, exactly on the very spot where he had stood when the other left him, appeared the mur-

derer. His features could not be seen, for they were still concealed by the crape over his face ; but the attitude of his head and whole person evinced that his eyes were fixed, through the black covering, upon the spot where his victim lay, now first made visible to his sight by the entrance of the light. In his hand was a long clasp-knife, hanging laxly, with the point towards the ground, and a drop or two of blood had dripped from it upon the floor. The disarrayed chamber, the overturned furniture, and a small stream of blood that was winding its way amidst the inequalities of an old-fashioned floor, towards the doorway, where the beams had sunk a little, made up the rest of the scene—and a fearful scene it was.

“ Is he quite dead ? ” demanded the man who entered, after a momentary pause.

“ As dead as Adam ! ” replied the other, “ And, as the business is done, there is no use of thinking more about it ! ” But the very words he used, might seem to imply that he had already been thinking more of what had passed than was very pleasing. “ Such obstinate fools will have

their own way—I never intended to kill him, I am sure ; but he would have it ; and he is quiet enough now !”

The other approached, and though, perhaps, the less resolute ruffian of the two, he now gazed upon the corpse, and spoke of it with that degree of vulgar jocularity, which is often affected to conceal more tremour and agitation than the actors in any horrid scenes may think becoming. Perhaps it was the same feelings that attempted to mask themselves in the overdone gaiety which Cromwell displayed on the trial and death of Charles Stuart.

“ The old covey is quiet enough now, as you say !” remarked the inferior ruffian, drawing near with the light. “ His tongue will never put you or I into the stone pitcher, Stephen.”

“ His blood may,” replied the other, “ if we do not make haste. She said the key of the chest was always upon him. There it is in his hand, as I live ! We must make you let go your hold, sir—But you grasp it as tight in death as you did in life.”

With some difficulty the fingers of the dead

man were unclosed, and the large key of the iron safe wrenched from his grasp. The freshly stimulated thirst of plunder, did away, for the moment, all feelings of remorse and awe; and the two ruffians hastened to unlock the iron door in the wall, the one wielding the key, while the other held the light, and gazed eagerly over his shoulder. The first drawer they opened caused them both to draw a long deep breath of self-gratulation, so splendid was the sight of the golden rows of new sovereigns and old guineas it displayed. A bag was instantly produced, and the whole contents emptied in uncounted. The hand of the principal plunderer was upon the second drawer, when a loud ring at the house-bell startled them in their proceedings.

“He will not open the door surely?” cried the one.

“No, no! I told him not?” answered the other. “But let us go down, to make sure.”

Setting the light on the floor, they both glided down the stairs, and arrived just in time to prevent their comrade, whom they had left upon guard below, from making an answer, as he was

imprudently about to do. The bell was again rung violently, and after a third application of the same kind, some heavy blows of a stick were added. Again and again the bell was rung ; and as the visiter seemed determined not to go away without effecting an entrance, the man who seemed to have led throughout the terrible work of that night, put his hand slowly into his pocket, and, drawing forth a pistol, laid his hand upon the lock of the door.

“ He will ring there till Sally comes up,” observed the other in a whisper, “ and then we shall be all blown.”

Just as the click of cocking the pistol, announced that the determination of the first ruffian was taken, a receding step was heard, and calmly replacing the weapon, he said, “ He is gone !—now let us back to our work quick, Tony !”

“ All is very silent up stairs,” said the young man who had been keeping watch, in a low and anxious tone.

“ Oh, the old man is tied and gagged sufficiently ! Do not be afraid, Wat !” replied the other. “ Only you keep quite quiet—If any

one comes, make no answer; but if they try to force a way in by the back-door, which is on the latch, give them a shot! You have good moonlight to take aim;" and mounting the stairs with the same quiet steps, he once more entered the chamber of the miser.

The young man who remained below, listened attentively; and though the footfalls of his two comrades, were as light as they well could be, yet he heard them distinctly enter the room where they had left the candle. As their steps receded, however, and no other sound followed, he suffered the hand which held the pistol to drop heavily by his side.

"They have killed the old man!" he muttered. "He would never lie still like a lubber, and see them pillage his chests, without making some noise, if he were not dead! I thought that cold-blooded rascal would do it, if it suited his cursed utility—I wish to God I had never"—

But the vain wish was interrupted by the sound of a door, gently opened below; and, in a moment after, the form of Sally, the miser's maid, appeared gliding up with a sort of noiseless step,

which showed her not unconscious of all that was proceeding within her master's dwelling. A low and hasty conversation now took place between her and the man upon watch, who told her his suspicions of the extent to which his companions had pushed their crime, notwithstanding a promise which they had made, it seems, to abstain from hurting their victim. Somewhat to his surprise and disgust, however, he found, that though the woman was trembling in every limb, from personal agitation and fear of discovery, yet she felt little of the horror, which he himself experienced, when he reflected on the murder of the poor defenceless old man. She replied in a low but flippant tone, that dead men tell no tales, and added, that she dared to say Mr Harding would not have done it, if the old fool had not resisted.

At that moment the light from above began to glimmer upon the stairs, and the two murderers soon after appeared, the one carrying a candle, and the other a heavy bag, with which they at once proceeded into the little parlour, where the old man had so lately sat with Mr Beauchamp.

The other two followed, and the one who had remained below, immediately taxed the principal personage in the tragedy, whom we may now call Harding, with the act he had just committed.

“Hush, hush!” cried Harding, in a stern tone, but one, the sternness of which, was that of remorse. “Hush, hush, boy! I would not have done it, if I could have helped it. But there,” he added, putting the heavy bag upon the table. “There, is enough to make your mother easy for the rest of her days.”

“And shall I be ever easy again for the rest of mine?” demanded the youth.

“I hope so!” answered his companion dryly. “But come, we must not lose time. This is too heavy for one of us to carry; and yet we have not found a quarter of what we expected—Sally, my love, fetch us some cloths, or handkerchiefs, or something. We may as well divide the money now, and each man carry his own.”

So saying, he poured the mingled heap of gold and silver on the table; and as soon as some cloths were procured to wrap it in, he proceeded

to divide it with his hand into four parts, saying, "Share and share alike!"

Some opposition was made to this, by the man who had accompanied him in the more active part of the night's work, and who declared that he did not think that the person who only kept watch, or the woman either, deserved to be put on the same footing with themselves, who had encountered the whole danger. He was at once, however, sternly overruled by Harding, whose character seemed to have undergone a strange change, amidst the fiery though brief period of intense passions through which he had just passed. The softer metal had been tempered into hard steel ; but when for a moment he removed the crape from his face, to give himself more air, it was pale, anxious, and haggard ; and had a look of sickened disgust withal, that was not in harmony with his tone.

Carefully, though rapidly, he rendered the several lots as nearly equal as the mere measurement of the eye would permit, bade his comrades each take that which he liked, and contented himself with the one they left. The necessity of

haste, or rather the apprehensiveness of guilt, made them all eager to abridge every proceeding ; and the money being tied up, and a large sum in notes divided, they prepared to depart.

“ Had we better go out by the back-door or the front ? ” demanded Harding, turning to the woman.

“ Oh, la ! by the front, to be sure ! ” she replied. “ The hind who lives in the cottage on the lea opposite, might see us if we went out by the back. Nobody can see us come out in the lane, unless some one be wandering about.”

“ We must take our chance of that ! ” replied Harding ; and, putting out the light, he led the way to the door.

CHAPTER VII.

“ AND now, my dear William,” said Sir Sidney Delaware, as soon as Mr Tims had departed, and the rolling wheels of his post-chaise were no longer heard grating down the western avenue—“ And now, my dear William, lay your angry spirit. Depend upon it, that man carries with him a sufficient punishment in the disappointment he has suffered. He is one of that class of rogues for whom the old Athenians, finding no appropriate corporeal infliction, decreed the punishment of the Stela ; or, in other words, ordered their names and infamy to be engraved upon a pillar, and thus held them up to shame for ever.

“As our law has no such just award,” replied Captain Delaware, “I should certainly have had great pleasure in writing his shame on his back with a horsewhip instead; but of course, as you did not like it, I forbore.”

No, no, my dear boy!” said his father, “You would have degraded yourself, gratified him, and had to pay a large sum for a small satisfaction. But now all that is past; explain to us the rest of the business. How happened the money to arrive so apropos, and without the accompaniment of the miser of Ryebury? Was Mr Tims senior, unwilling to meet Mr Tims junior, on a business, in regard to which it was evident that the lawyer both wished and anticipated a different result?”

“Strange enough to say, my dear sir,” replied Captain Delaware, “you are asking me questions which I cannot at all answer—There is Blanche smiling,” he added, “because I told her the same, before I came down, and she chose to be incredulous—though she knows that there never was sailor or landsman yet, so little given to romancing as I am.”

“ But you can tell me when it was you received the money ?” said Sir Sidney, in some degree of surprise.

“ Oh, certainly, sir !” answered his son. “ It was this morning, not long before Blanche came up to my room.”

“ Why, they told me you had not been out this morning,” said his father.

“ Neither have I, my dear sir,” replied Captain Delaware.

“ In short, papa, he makes a mystery of the whole affair,” said Blanche ; “ and will not say how or where he got it.”

“ You are wrong, my dear sister,” rejoined her brother. “ I am perfectly willing to say how and where I got it ; and in fact I told you before.”

“ Oh but, William !” exclaimed his sister, “ I saw very well that you were only jesting. You did not, I am sure, intend me to give credence to that story ?”

“ Well for you that you are not a man, my pretty Blanche,” answered Captain Delaware, shaking his hand at her good-humouredly.

“ I will repeat the same, word for word, to my father ; and if he do not believe me, I will swear to it if he likes.”

“ Not I—not I, William !” said Sir Sidney. “ Any thing that you assert in so solemn a manner, I will believe without any swearing, however improbable it may be.”

“ Well then, my dear sir,” replied Captain Delaware, “ the fact is this : When I rose this morning, in looking about for something on my dressing-table, I found a paper parcel with my name written upon it ; and, on opening it, saw the notes which I just now gave to that blackguard. There was no one thing in or about the parcel that could lead me to divine from whom or whence it came ; but as it contained the precise sum required, and was addressed to myself, I could not doubt the purpose for which it was intended. I have a vague recollection, indeed, of seeing it lying there last night ; but I was out of humour, and somewhat sick at heart, and took but little notice of any thing. However, it must have been there when

I went to bed, for no one could have come into my room without my hearing them."

"Hum!" said Sir Sidney Delaware, with a smile. "Hum!" and, notwithstanding his promise of full faith in his son's account, it was evident he did not give credit to a word of it. "Well, well, William," he said, "we will not press you hard; though your grave face almost deserves that one should believe you."

"On my word, sir! On my honour!" reiterated Captain Delaware, "Every word that I tell you is true. This is very hard indeed that I am not to be believed even when I pledge my honour."

"Nay, nay!" said Sir Sidney. "If you bring your honour into the scrape, my dear boy, I suppose we must believe you. But you will not, I dare say, deny that you have some shrewd guess at how the money came there, or who sent it?"

"In regard to the person who sent it," answered Captain Delaware, a good deal mortified at doubts which he felt he did not deserve, "I have certainly a very strong sus-

picion, though I do not feel justified in naming the friend to whom my mind turns; but, as to how it came there, I am fully as ignorant as yourself or Blanche."

"Well, all I can say is, that the whole business is very extraordinary," replied Sir Sidney Delaware, more gravely than he had hitherto spoken. "Indeed, I know not which would seem the most strange, that such a large sum should be left in your room without your privity or knowledge; or that my son should so strongly assert, even in jest, what is not strictly true."

"Sir, you are doing me injustice!" said Captain Delaware, with a burning cheek and a quivering lip; "and, as it is so, I will soon investigate, and, if possible, discover how it was that this took place;" and, striding across the room, he rang the bell with a degree of violence, which showed the pain it cost him to brook respectfully, even from his father, the doubt that Sir Sidney's last words insinuated. Blanche gently glided across the room; and, laying her hand upon his arm, raised her beautiful eyes

to his with a look half imploring half reproachful. Captain Delaware did not reply, but turned away ; and, walking to the window, looked out into the park till the servant appeared.

“ Who left a paper parcel on my dressing-table last night ? ” he demanded abruptly, and somewhat sharply too, as the man entered.

The first reply was a stare of astonishment at the unwonted tone of one usually so mild and kindly in his whole deportment. “ I m sure I do not know, sir ! ” answered the man as soon as he had recovered. “ I did not ! ”

“ William, you are heated,” said Sir Sidney Delaware, interrupting his son, as he was about to put another question to the servant. “ I perceive now, perhaps too plainly, that the matter is not a jest ; and therefore, of course, believe what you have said. The business, however, must be investigated ; as we cannot lie under so great an obligation to any one, without due acknowledgement and repayment—Did you see any stranger about the house or near it during the course of yesterday evening ? ” he continued, turning to the servant.

“No one, sir,” replied the man. “That is to say, no one near the house. In the lanes, at the back of the park, I met Harding, Mr Burrel’s valet, loitering about with another young man towards dusk; and now, I recollect, the housemaid declared that she saw some one just passing by the terrace at about eight or nine o’clock.”

“Send the housemaid here!” said Sir Sidney; “and desire Mrs Williams”—the name of the old housekeeper—“and desire Mrs Williams to come with her.”

The commands of Sir Sidney were immediately obeyed, and the examination of the housemaid began in form. The footman, however, had already told nearly as much as she could tell herself. When going along one of the corridors, during the previous evening, to shut the windows which looked out upon the western part of the park, she had seen a gentleman, she said, walking along just below the terrace, towards the wood. She could not tell who he was, for she only saw him for a moment; and, as he was partly concealed by the raised

terrace on which the house stood, she only caught a sight of his head and shoulders."

Here ended all information. The old housekeeper had seen no one, and the housemaid declared that she neither could tell how tall the gentleman was, nor could vouchsafe any other particulars in regard to his personal appearance, except that he was a gentleman, she was sure ; for he walked like a gentleman. Sir Sidney would fain have forced her into a definition of the walk of a gentleman ; but the housemaid was not to be caught, and took refuge in stupidity, as usual in such cases.

By the time this was over, William Delaware's heat had evaporated, and it was with a smile he asked his father, " Well, sir, who do you think our *dear unknown friend* is ?"

" Why, of course, William, I cannot say who it positively is," replied Sir Sidney ; " but it would not surprise me, were I to find that it was your admirable friend Burrel."

" Nor I either !" answered William Delaware. " What do you think, Blanche ?"

But Blanche was looking out of the window,

with a very red tip to the fair finely-turned ear that rested on the smooth glossy waves of her rich brown hair. Perhaps she did not hear the question, but certainly she did not answer it; and her brother, though he would fain have said a word or two of kind malice, could he have known how far he might venture without inflicting real pain, would not run the risk.

“ I wish, William,” said his father, “ that you would go down to Emberton and see Mr Burrel. The circumstances of the proposed arrangement with Lord Ashborough were mentioned more than once in his presence, and if he have heard by any chance of there being a delay on the part of Mr Tims, he may certainly have taken means to remedy that inconvenience. In fact, I know of no other person at all likely to perform such an act of liberality in this somewhat romantic manner.”

Blanche glided out of the room, and her father went on. “ Mrs Darlington, though a very good woman, and not without feeling, does not perform such acts as this. Otherwise, as she came to Emberton I hear yesterday, to meet Dr

Wilton and another magistrate about this burning of her house, we might have supposed that she was the lender of the money. Good Dr Wilton himself could not, I know, command so large a sum. I wish, therefore, you would go and visit Mr Burrel, and tell him that, while we accept the loan as an obligation, and appreciate his conduct as it should be appreciated, we are desirous of giving him a mortgage upon the property which he has released from so great a burden."

"I will go down almost immediately, sir," replied Captain Delaware ; but, in all the confusion of this morning, I have lost my breakfast, for it seems that the surprise and wonderment of finding the packet, detained me till you and Blanche had finished."

The bell was rung, breakfast was again made, and Captain Delaware proceeded somewhat quickly in the task of despatching it, reflecting, in the intervals of a broken conversation with his father, upon all that he would have to say to Burrel—how he might best and most delicately thank him for the kindness and prompti-

tude of the service he had rendered—how he might arrive at the facts of his situation in regard to Blanche; and whether he would be justified in communicating at once to Sir Sidney his cousin's real name, without consulting Beauchamp himself. In the meanwhile, the baronet walked backwards and forwards—now looked out of the window—now talked with his son, feeling that degree of pleasant perturbation, that sort of long swell, which remains after some moment of peculiar agitation is happily over, and the mind is settling down slowly into a calm.

Before his son had finished his breakfast, however, Sir Sidney remarked that there seemed a great many people in the park. “I suppose,” he said, “the worthy lawyer has informed the good folks of the town that we are rather more than a thousand a-year richer than we were in the morning; and therefore we may now expect the respectful congratulations of all those who treated us with the greatest degree of contempt while we were poor.

“I will go and kick them out, sir, directly,”

said Captain Delaware, "if you will allow me to finish this piece of toast."

"I hope you may finish a great many, William," replied his father, "before you begin kicking at all. But there really seems something extraordinary here. There is a whole posse, and here is a chariot driving up the avenue—Dr Wilton's, I think."

Captain Delaware rose for a moment, looked out of the window, declared the carriage to be certainly Dr Wilton's, and the personages on foot to be a set of blackguards, who had no business there ; and then sat down to his breakfast again, with the intention, as soon as he had concluded, of going forth and sending the gentry, who had now approached close to the house, back to the town without any very flattering expression of regard. He was just depositing his coffee-cup in the saucer, when Dr Wilton entered the room unannounced, accompanied by another magistrate, and followed by Mr Peter Tims, with two or three other persons, whose appearance in that place greatly surprised both Sir Sidney and his son.

The baronet advanced, however, and shook his reverend friend by the hand ; and Captain Delaware exclaimed laughing, “ Why, my dear Dr Wilton, I never thought to see you with such a crew, headed by such a rascally boatswain as that behind you.—Why, you have got all the constables of Emberton at your back ! What is the matter ? ”

“ I am sorry to say, my dear William, that I am come upon a very serious business,” replied Dr Wilton ; “ although, indeed, the part that regards you, both our good friend here, Mr Egerton, and myself, look upon as quite ridiculous. Yet the matter is of so very horrible a nature, that it does not admit of a jest ; and this person—this gentleman, urges a charge against you, so seriously and plausibly, that we are forced to examine into the matter, though we doubt not that you can clear yourself at once.”

“ The scoundrel does not pretend to say that I struck him ! ” cried Captain Delaware, his cheek burning with anger, “ I threatened, indeed, and I wish I had put my threat ”——

“ The charge is a much more serious one

than that," said Dr Wilton, interrupting him ; and then, turning to his brother magistrate, he said in a low tone. " Remark his demeanour ! I told you it was ridiculous !"

" You had better, however, have the warrant executed," replied the other, in the same low tone. " We can hold the examination here ; and if it turn out as you expect, discharge it as soon as the business is over."

" What is the matter, gentlemen ?" said Sir Sidney Delaware. " All this seems very strange ! Will you be kind enough to explain !"

" Captain Delaware," said Mr Egerton, " we are here upon an unpleasant duty. You are charged by this person, who is, I am told, Mr Tims, a lawyer of Clement's Inn, with a very serious crime ; and although, from your character and station, Dr Wilton and myself do not for a moment believe the accusation to originate in anything but error, and are willing to do all to spare your feelings ; yet, in pursuit of the ends of justice, we are bound to act towards you as we would towards any other person in the same situation. A charge against you, then, having

been made before us, upon oath, we were bound to grant a warrant against you, which must now be executed. The examination, however, can as well take place here as elsewhere; and as this gentleman has declared that he is ready to go into it immediately, we will instantly proceed, not at all doubting that you can clear yourself at once."

Captain Delaware had listened at first with surprise and indignation; but gradually, as the importance of the whole business became strongly impressed upon his mind, he assumed a more serious aspect, and bowing low, in reply to Mr Eger-ton's address, he said, gravely but frankly, "Although I cannot divine what charge that person is about to bring—or rather has brought—against me; yet I thank you, sir, for the courtesy with which you are inclined to treat me, and of course surrender myself at once. Do not look so shocked, my dear father," he added, turning towards Sir Sidney; "be assured that your son never did an act that he was ashamed to acknowledge in the face of the whole world. But I think you had better leave us; for this business seems likely to be too painful for you."

“ Never, never, my dear boy !” replied Sir Sidney. “ Never ! I am a magistrate also, and should know something of these affairs ; and though, of course, I cannot act in your case, I will not leave you while I have life.”

A tear rose in Dr Wilton’s eye ; but Mr Egerton beckoned forward the officer charged with the warrant against Captain Delaware, to whom the young gentleman surrendered immediately, merely requiring to be informed of the nature of the crime with which he was charged.

“ I object ! I object !” cried Mr Peter Tims. “ I will not have the prisoner put upon his guard !”

“ You seem strangely ignorant of the fundamental principles of English law, sir, for a person who follows it as a profession,” replied Mr Egerton. “ Captain Delaware, you are charged with the murder of a person of the name of Tims, residing at Ryebury, in this neighbourhood.”

“ Good God !” exclaimed Captain Delaware, with unfeigned horror, “ Then that is the reason the poor fellow did not bring the money last night.”

“Put down that observation, clerk!” said Dr Wilton to a young man who had followed into the room with the constables, and two or three other persons.

“Let us carry on the matter a little more formally, my dear sir,” said Mr Egerton. “Sir Sidney, with your permission, we will take our seats here.—Clerk, place yourself there.—Constable, put a chair for Captain Delaware at the bottom of the table—stand back yourself, and keep those other persons back. Captain Delaware, it is customary to warn persons in your present situation, against saying anything that may commit themselves. To you I have only to remark, that your examination will of course be taken down, and may hereafter be brought against you.”

“You will understand, however,” added Dr Wilton, “that the present investigation is merely instituted by us, to ascertain whether this person can bring forward sufficient evidence in support of the accusation, to oblige us to remand you for farther examination.”

“I shall bring forward sufficient evidence to

compel you to commit him," cried Mr Tims, "however prejudiced you may be in his favour."

"Do not be insolent, sir !" said Mr Egerton, "or I may find it necessary to punish you in the first instance. Your charge is already made, and we shall proceed with the examination as we judge most expedient ourselves. Remember, Captain Delaware, you are warned against committing yourself."

"I have nothing to conceal, sir, and therefore have no reason to fear saying anything that is true !" replied the young officer. "Pray, proceed !"

"Well, then, let me ask," said Mr Egerton, "when and where you happened to see Mr Tims—generally known by the name of the miser of Ryebury—for the last time ?"

"It was yesterday morning," replied Captain Delaware. "I met him first in the lanes leading to his own house ; accompanied him home, and left him there."

"Pray, did any high words pass between you and him, on that occasion ?" demanded the magistrate ; "and if so, what was the subject of dis-

pute? You are not compelled to answer, unless you like."

"I am sorry to say," replied Captain Delaware, "that there were high words passed between myself and the poor old man. The cause of them was simply, that he had agreed to furnish a certain sum of money to pay off an annuity which was pressing heavily upon this estate; and that he failed to perform his promise at the time agreed upon."

"And to obtain which, whether he would or not, you murdered him!" cried Mr Peter Tims.

Captain Delaware started up, with the fire flashing from his eyes, but instantly resumed his seat, saying, "Am I to be thus insulted, gentlemen?"

"Mr Peter Tims," said Mr Egerton sternly, "if you again interrupt the proceedings, I will have you removed from the room; and if you are insolent," he added, seeing the other about to reply, "I shall equally know how to deal with you!"

The lawyer was silent, and Dr Wilton demanded, "Will you state, Captain Delaware,

whether on your last meeting with the unhappy man, Mr Tims, you threatened to strike him, or used any violent menaces towards him ?”

William Delaware reddened, but he replied at once, “ Sorry I am to say, my dear sir, that I did threaten to horsewhip him ; but it was upon severe provocation, from the cool insolence with which he informed me that he was not able to keep the promise he had made—the performance of which was of infinite consequence to my family.”

“ And are you certain, Captain Delaware,” demanded Mr Egerton, “ that that was the last time you ever saw this unhappy man ?”

“ Perfectly certain !” replied the young officer ; and then added, after a momentary pause, “ I went to his house last night, in order to ascertain whether the money had arrived, but could not obtain admittance. I rang several times without effect.”

Dr Wilton and Mr Egerton looked at each other, and the latter then demanded—“ Then pray, Captain Delaware, where did you obtain the money which you paid to Mr Tims here present this morning ?”

“I suppose, sir,” replied Captain Delaware, with some degree of haughtiness, “that, as the question is evidently intended to entangle me, I might, according to the principle you have yourself laid down, refuse to answer; but it is indeed unnecessary to do so, and if the simple truth do not clear me, I can hope for nothing else.” He then circumstantially recapitulated the same story which he had that morning related to his father, concerning the receipt of the money.

Mr Tims laughed scornfully, and Mr Egerton looked to Dr Wilton, who, in return, whispered something to him, which seemed to make an immediate impression. “Captain Delaware,” he said, “it is fit that I should inform you, that a strong case is made out against you. In the first place, there has been evidence on oath given before us, at the house of this unfortunate man, Mr Tims, that you were heard to threaten him violently yesterday morning—clerk, hand me the minute of Farmer Ritson’s evidence—yes, those are the words! In the next place, you were seen going towards his house last night

after sunset, and two or three other persons unknown, were observed proceeding in the same direction. About that period the deceased was evidently still alive, as his servant, it appears, was sent to Emberton for bill stamps, the written description of which is before us in his own hand. The man has been found murdered, in the very room where he kept his money, as if he had been killed in the act of taking out certain sums from his iron chest. The body of the woman has not been discovered, but a long track of blood down the stairs, has pointed the direction in which it was carried, and doubtless it will be found ere long."

Captain Delaware had listened attentively, but not without impatience; for perfect innocence made him feel the charge utterly absurd, and at length he broke forth. "And do you, sir," he exclaimed, "call it a strong case, that I was heard to threaten an old knavish miser with a horsewhipping, and was seen somewhere in the neighbourhood of his house on

the night that he was killed, without any other evidence whatever?"

"Not without any other evidence whatever, Captain Delaware," replied Mr Egerton, somewhat sharply. "But on a train of circumstantial evidence, sir, very painful for us to contemplate. You mistake the matter, Captain Delaware," he added, in a more kindly tone. "Your previous high character induces us to put the most liberal construction upon every thing, and to extend to your case the most calm—nay, the most friendly—consideration that justice will admit, before we even remand you to await the result of the coroner's inquest. Besides the circumstances I have stated, you must remember, that you yourself acknowledge that, up to a late hour last night, you were not possessed of the sum required. By half-past nine this morning, that sum is in your possession. One of the notes before me bears the mark of a forefinger stained with blood; and in the bedroom of the deceased a paper has been found, dated yesterday morning, in which the dates and numbers of some of the notes paid by you this morning are marked

as having been received by post that day. Your account of the manner in which the money came into your hands, is somewhat extraordinary—nay, so much so, as to be highly improbable; and I fear, that unless you can in some way explain these circumstances, we shall be bound to commit you at once.”

Sir Sidney Delaware hid his face in his handkerchief, and wept. Mr Tims rubbed his hands with a degree of glee, not at all diminished by the loss of his uncle, and Captain Delaware gazed upon the two magistrates, stupified at finding himself suddenly placed in circumstances so suspicious. There was innocence, however, in the whole expression of his countenance; in the surprise, in the horror, in the bewilderment it betrayed; and Mr Egerton, who was a shrewd and observing, without being an unfeeling man, saw that such conduct could not be affected, and believed that it could only proceed from a heart devoid of guilt.

“Bethink yourself, my dear sir!” he said, after a short pause, during which he awaited in vain Captain Delaware’s answer. “However

improbable, I will not believe any thing that you have said to be untrue."

"If you did, sir, I could pardon you," replied the young officer, with a glowing cheek; "for, long ere you appeared, I could scarcely prevail upon my own family to believe the tale. How much more, then, might it be doubted by a person who is nearly a stranger to me?"

"Well but, my dear sir!" said Mr Egerton, more convinced of the prisoner's innocence, by this outbreak of feeling, than he had been before, "Can you not account for the fact of the money being so placed in your bedroom?"

Captain Delaware related what had passed in the morning, and the servants being called, recapitulated their tale; the footman declaring that he had seen no one but Mr Burrel's man, Harding, in the lanes at the back of the park, and the housemaid swearing that she had seen a stranger on the terrace just after nightfall. Dr Wilton, at the first sound of Burrel's name, sent off a messenger to his lodging at Emberton, with orders to bring up the landlady with Harding, and the groom, if the two latter were still

there; and, in the meanwhile, Mr Egerton continued the examination, evidently more with a view of giving the prisoner every chance of explaining the suspicious circumstances, than with a wish to find him guilty.

“Now, Captain Delaware,” he said, “I am about to put a question to you, which the circumstances, I believe, fully justify. Do you, or do you not, know any one who was likely to perform so extraordinary, and, I must say, foolish an act, as that of placing so large a sum in your chamber, without giving you any notice of his so doing?—I say, have you any suspicion as to who was the person who did so?”

“I certainly have, sir!” replied William Delaware. “And he was not a man to do a foolish act. Circumstances unknown to you, sir, might induce him to do, in the present instance, what he would not have done upon any other motives.”

“And pray, sir, who may he be?” demanded the magistrate.

Captain Delaware paused; but replied, after an instant’s thought—“My present situation, of

course, compels me to be more explicit upon such a subject, than I otherwise should be. The person I suspect of having placed the money in my room, is a gentleman who has lately been residing at Emberton, under the name of Burrel, but who may now be named as my cousin, Henry Beauchamp."

Sir Sidney Delaware started up off his chair, but immediately resumed his seat again; and another look of intelligence passed between Mr Egerton and Dr Wilton.

"I appeal to Dr Wilton," added Captain Delaware, "if such a thing be not probable."

"Most probable in his case!" replied Dr Wilton. "Indeed, more than probable"—

"Pray, sir, are you now acting as a magistrate or as a witness?" demanded Mr Tims. "If as the latter, I would ask you, whether Mr Beauchamp did not pass the day at your house yesterday, which I hear in the village that he did beyond all doubt?"

"Then you have heard, sir, what was not the case!" replied Dr Wilton.

"Pray, at what hour did he leave your house,

sir?" demanded Mr Tims, taking care to preserve so respectful a tone as to afford no excuse for refusing an answer to his question.

"I should not hold myself bound to reply to you, sir," said the clergyman; "but a sense of justice must of course supersede every other consideration, whether indignation at impudence, or contempt for low cunning; and therefore I reply, that he left my house, I should suppose, about three o'clock."

"I will presume to ask one question more, if I am permitted," said the unruffled Mr Peter Tims, bowing to Mr Egerton, who was evidently listening with interest. "At Mr Beauchamp's departure, Dr Wilton, did he tell you whither he was about to turn his steps?"

Dr Wilton fidgeted on his seat; but truth was paramount, and he answered, "He certainly implied that he was going to London."

"Did he take the road which leads in that direction?" asked Mr Tims.

"He did!" replied the clergyman, and the interrogatory dropped, by a low bow on the part of the lawyer to both the magistrates.

The examination now paused for several minutes, till good Mrs Wilson, who had been Beauchamp's landlady at Emberton, was brought into the room. Although the questions which were asked her were few, and of the simplest kind, the poor woman gave her evidence in as wild and confused a manner as if she had been charged with the murder herself. The result, however, was, that she swore Mr Burrel had left her house early in the forenoon of the preceding day, as she understood, for London; that his groom, with the greater part of his luggage, had gone by the coach that very morning; and that his gentleman, Mr Harding, had followed his master the night before. She could not say exactly at what hour; but swore that it was between eight and ten.

This evidence was all that could be adduced at the time; and Mr Tims, upon the strength of the case he had made out, resumed a degree of his former insolence, and demanded loudly, that Captain Delaware should instantly be committed.

A long conversation, which was carried on in

so low a tone as to be inaudible to any one but the two magistrates and the clerk, then ensued between Dr Wilton and Mr Egerton; the latter of whom at length said, to the surprise even of Captain Delaware himself, "I do not think, Mr Tims, that, all things considered, we should be justified in committing the prisoner till after the coroner's jury have sat upon the body. We have determined, sir, to remand him."

Mr Tims stormed and raved, slapped the table with all the unction of forensic eloquence, and demanded where the magistrates intended to confine the prisoner in the mean time. There was no place of security nearer than the county town, except the cage at Emberton; and he doubted not—he added, with a sneer—that the friendship which the worthy magistrates entertained for the prisoner would prevent him from occupying that lodging.

"Our sense of decency and humanity will do so, at least," replied Mr Egerton, coolly. "In a word, sir, we do not think that there is sufficient direct evidence before us to commit the

accused till the coroner's inquest has sat. The coroner has been already sent for, and the inquest can be held immediately. The jury may themselves like to examine the prisoner; and, therefore, it will be useless to send him to the county town. In order to spare his feelings as much as possible, which of course we wish to do, we have determined, if two of our most active constables can find a room in this house which they judge undoubtedly secure, to leave him here, under their custody. If not, he must be removed to Emberton, and placed in the justice room, though the security of it is doubtful."

In vain the lawyer argued. The justices were determined; and the officers, after spending some time in examining the house, returned, declaring that no room in a prison could be more secure than the prisoner's own bedroom, which was so high above the terrace, that no escape could be effected from the window; and which had but one door, opening into an anteroom, where they could keep watch. Mr Tims himself was permitted to examine the room; and could not but acknowledge that he was satisfied. The con-

stables received every injunction to be cautious, and Captain Delaware having been asked whether he had any thing farther to say, replied that he had not.

“ Then you may remove the prisoner !” said Mr Egerton.

Sir Sidney Delaware staggered up, and caught him in his arms. Captain Delaware pressed his father for a moment to his heart ; and saying, in a low but firm voice, “ Do not be afraid—I am as innocent as a child of the charge they bring against me !” tore himself away, and quitted the room.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHILE the examination had been proceeding in the little breakfast-parlour, the ear of Captain Delaware had been more than once struck by a number of voices speaking in the library, from which it opened; and as he was conducted through that apartment, the first sight that presented itself was his sister, Blanche, bathed in tears. She had been prevented from entering the room in which the magistrates sat; but the moment she beheld her brother, she sprang forward, and threw herself into his arms, clinging to his bosom in an agony of distress and tenderness. Captain Delaware kissed her cheek, and bade her be comforted, assuring her that the

charge against him was not only false, but perfectly absurd ; and that a few hours would set him at liberty again.

“ Oh, no ! No, no !” cried Blanche. “ I see it all, William ! It is all part of a plot to ruin us, and they will never be satisfied till we are crushed and disgraced. That Lord Ashborough and his lawyer, will work their designs by some means, be assured !”

At that moment Dr Wilton advanced from the inner room, and withdrew Blanche from the arms of her brother, bidding her take heart ; and whispering that he had already sent off a messenger for Mr Beauchamp, whose presence, he doubted not, would clear up the whole story. Blanche shook her head mournfully, and covered her eyes with her hands, while her brother was led away to his own room. The door was locked on the outside, and the constables, placing themselves in the anteroom, cut off all communication between the young officer and his family, who remained desolate and anxious, amidst the scenes which had lately been so full of calm happiness and enjoyment.

In the meanwhile, Captain Delaware seated himself at the table, in his own room, and endeavoured to bend the whole powers of his mind to the investigation of his own situation, in all its bearings. While either in the actual presence of the magistrates, or under the eyes of his own family, he had felt it necessary to repel every thought of real danger, and not to yield one step to apprehension; but now he saw that it was indispensable to look at his situation in the worst point of view, and to admit the utmost extent of the peril in which he stood.

He was innocent! that was one great source of confidence and expectation, for he believed, and felt sure, that an innocent man had very seldom suffered. But still such things had occasionally taken place, beyond all doubt; and it behoved him to consider whether his own might not be one of those cases, in which such an event was likely. As he looked at the evidence against himself, he could not but acknowledge that, as it stood at the present moment, there was a strong presumption of his guilt. He had been seen to threaten the murdered man, in

the morning ; he had been seen in the neighbourhood of his house, on the night the murder was committed ; he had been in known and acknowledged want of the money up to that hour ; and then he had suddenly obtained possession of it in a manner of which he could give no probable account. Several of the notes had been certainly in possession of the murdered man, a few hours before the crime was committed on his person ; and one of them he had himself remarked, while paying it to the lawyer, appeared stained with blood. “ Were I upon a jury,” he thought “ what verdict would I return ? Guilty, undoubtedly—unless some clear explanation of such suspicious circumstances could be given and substantiated. Now, let me consider what I have to give, and how it can be proved.”

“ I have nothing but the bare supposition that the money was placed in my room by Henry Beauchamp, or by his servant ; and although that surmise may be equal to a certainty in my own mind, it is likely to have little weight with others. Dr Wilton, too, admits that he set out for London about three o'clock, when the money

assuredly was not here! Can I be mistaken in supposing it to have been him? Can Blanche's suspicion be correct, that this is part of a plan to ruin my father and his family for ever?"

As these ideas crossed William Delaware's mind, he shuddered with mingled feelings of horror at the thought of such guilt, and apprehension for the consequences to himself; but at the same time, as he suffered his mind to rest upon the suspicion, it acquired a degree of probability that he was not inclined to assign to it at first. He recalled the conduct which Lord Ashborough had pursued towards his father through life—the vindictive malice he had displayed during the two or three years that elapsed after their first quarrel, as young men—the cold grinding exactions, not unmingled with scorn, with which he had kept him through life at fortune's lowest ebb—the rude harshness with which he had repelled his first proposal for redeeming the annuity. Then the sudden change in his manners—the facility with which he agreed to that which he had so peremp-

torily declined—the business of the bills—the delay in the payment—and the fact of the lawyer having come down prepared with a writ against his father, before he could have known, except by collusion with the miser, whether the money would be paid or not—all these facts passed before his remembrance, and with that rapidity of conclusion which was one of his greatest weaknesses, he instantly became convinced that Lord Ashborough and his adviser would halt at no step which might crush his father, and his father's house ; that the present charge originated in such motives ; and that it would be supported against him by every artful device that hatred could frame, or wealth and skill could carry through. He did not, it is true, suppose that the unhappy man at Ryebury had been murdered with a view to the charge against him ; but he did believe that the murder had been seized upon as an incident to render the crime more heinous ; and, however it occurred that the two facts leaped so well together, he concluded that the money had been placed in his room for the express purpose of betraying himself and his family, by

bringing against him some accusation, the very suspicion of which would ruin him in his profession, degrade him from his station in society, and sink his father beneath a load of shame and despair.

He thought over it, again and again ; and whenever the improbabilities, which were not thinly mingled with the composition of his suspicions, came across his mind, and made him begin to doubt if he were right, he set against them, on the other hand, all the reasons that existed for believing that the money could not have been left by Beauchamp, and called to mind also the words of his sister.

“ How could such a suspicion enter her mind,” he asked himself, “ unless she had discovered something to make her believe that Lord Ashborough and his lawyer were bent upon her family’s ruin ?” and, as he thus thought, he would have given worlds for a few minutes’ conversation with Blanche, longing for it, of course, the more eagerly on account of its impossibility.

Whichever way he turned, there were improbabilities to be encountered ; and for long he

vacillated between the opinion that Beauchamp had left the money in his chamber, and the suspicion that it had been placed there by some of the agents of Lord Ashborough, in order that a charge of robbery, embezzlement, or something equally criminal and degrading, might be raised upon the fact. Now the one predominated, now the other, and his mind continued tossed between the two, like a ship rolling in the long swell that follows a severe storm. At length he determined to write down all the causes of suspicion he had against the lawyer Peter Tims, in order to lay them clearly and substantially before the magistrates or the coroner, that his own established reputation and high character might be supported by strong proofs of animosity and vindictive feeling on the part of the accuser.

Materials for writing were luckily to be found in his chamber, and he proceeded to place on paper the history of the whole transaction with Lord Ashborough up to the payment of the bill that morning; but the effect upon his own mind was fully as great as that which he intended to produce upon others; and, before he had con-

cluded the paper, he was morally convinced, that by the instigation of Lord Ashborough's agent, and by his instigation alone, the money had been left in his room. He laid down the pen to combine in thought this certainty with the presumptions of guilt already brought forward against him ; and, as he perceived how much might be made of the evidence already collected—how little opportunity the law allowed him for gathering the means of rebutting the accusation—and what a facility unbounded wealth, great influence, and freedom from all restraint, gave to his enemy, he clasped his hands and gave himself up to despair.

“ Beauchamp will of course be sent for,” he thought ; “ and, when he comes, it only remains for him to declare that he had nothing to do with the transaction—and my condemnation takes place of course. Good God ! a Commander in his Majesty's Navy to die like a common felon ! My name and my family to be branded with infamy for ever ! My father to expire of shame within the year ; and my poor Blanche, if she survive, to be pointed at for life

as the sister of the murderer, William Delaware! Ay!" he thought more bitterly still; "and Beauchamp will thank his good stars which kept him from such an alliance; and Maria Beauchamp may perhaps blush when she remembers that the murderer was her cousin. But time," he cried, starting up, "time will do me justice, and clear my name; and then she may weep to think how I was wronged, and how she believed it!"

After walking up and down the room for some time, in a state of mind which it would be difficult to describe, he took down a book and endeavoured to read, but in vain. He then strove to amuse his mind by looking out of the window, which commanded an extensive view over the wilder part of the park at the back of the house, and thence to the rich country beyond Ryebury, and the high downs which crowned the cliffs above the sea. All the scene was bright and clear, and there was a beautiful air of freshness and liberty in the whole—the very clouds, as they skimmed over the sky, and raced their dark shadows along

the sea, spoke of light freedom, and no one would have enjoyed it more than William Delaware at any other moment ; but every thing that is sweet, requires the heart to be in tune. The pitch of all his feelings was many a tone too low—the fairer was the scene the greater was the discord it produced with the thoughts of the prisoner, and the whole was “ like sweet bells jangled out of tune, and harsh.”

“ Time,” he still thought, “ time will clear my fame, and do me justice ; and in the meanwhile, doubtless, I shall die condemned. Still, it is hard enough to feel that one is innocent, and yet to bear the shame and the punishment of the guilty. I wish to Heaven I could speak with Blanche !” Approaching the door, he knocked somewhat sharply, exclaiming, “ Mr Thomson, I much wish that I could speak with my sister for a few minutes ! Can you not grant me such a liberty ?”

“ Quite impossible, Captain !” replied the chief constable. “ I wish to Heaven I dared ! I am sure you know that I would do any thing I could to help you. But this, you see, is no ordinary

job ; and though I know well enough you are innocent, yet that fellow, Tims, threatened us so, we dare not for our lives."

"Well, I cannot help it then !" answered the prisoner, with a sigh. "Do you know whether the coroner is arrived yet ?"

"Not yet, sir !" answered the constable, still speaking through the door. "The jury is summoned for five o'clock, I hear."

Captain Delaware looked at his watch. It was just three ; and for the long hours that succeeded, he continued in the same frame of mind, torturing himself with all those dreamy miseries that an imaginative and impatient heart calls up constantly to aggravate all the ills of misfortune or disappointment. There is no such terrible tamer of the spirit as solitary confinement ; and, ere nightfall, the whole hopes and expectations of William Delaware were completely sunk, and the state of his mind was pure despair.

His dinner, which had been brought in by one of the constables at five, remained untouched ; and he listened to every sound, expecting each moment to be called before the

coroner ; but no summons came. At length, just as night was approaching, he heard a considerable sound of voices in the anteroom ; and, starting up, he prepared to go along with the messenger, who, he doubted not, had been despatched for him ; but the sound subsided, and, in a minute after, the constable again entered the room.

“ You had better take something really, Captain,” said the man kindly, eyeing the untasted dinner. “ There is no use, you know, sir, of letting your heart get down that way.”

“ I have been expecting to be sent for every minute,” replied the prisoner ; “ and I cannot eat in such a state of anxiety.”

“ You will not be sent for to-night, Captain,” replied the constable.

“ Has the coroner sat, then ?” demanded Captain Delaware.

“ Ay, sir !” was the answer.

“ And what is the verdict ?” cried the accused, fixing his eyes eagerly upon the officer’s face.

“ Wilful murder, sir !” answered the constable, shaking his head.

“Against me?” exclaimed the prisoner.

“Even so!” replied the officer sadly. “Even so!”

Captain Delaware fell back into his chair, and clasped his hands over his eyes, while the man went on trying to comfort him.

“That is nothing, you know, sir—nothing at all!” he said. “You have had no time, you know, to prove your innocence—You have had no trial yet. Lord bless you, sir, nobody in the town believes you guilty! They all know you too well—and, when it comes to the trial, all will go right, depend upon it. Even the coroner, they tell me, said the case was so doubtful a one, that he would not have you removed to-night. But you had better take something really.”

Captain Delaware signified that it was impossible; and the man, telling him that he would bring him a light in a short time, left him to himself. His thoughts and feeling may perhaps be conceived, but cannot be written. Had there lingered a ray of hope in his mind before this announcement reached him, it would now have vanished; but,

amidst the agonized feelings which possessed him, if there was one sensation more painful than the rest, it was produced by the thought, that on the morrow he was to be hurried away to the common jail—there, beyond doubt, as he now thought, to await an unjust sentence and an ignominious death. His ideas were still in the same state of confused bewilderment, when the constable returned with a light, and, setting it down on the table, he said—

“ Captain ! there is your good old housekeeper, Mrs Williams, takes on terribly because you will not eat ; and she’s so pressing to speak with you through the door, to see if she cannot get you to take something, that I have promised her she shall, while the other officer is down at his supper. So, do take something, if it be but to please the old lady !”

“ Well, well, I will speak to her when she comes !” answered Captain Delaware in the same desponding tone ; and Mr Thomson withdrew.

In about five minutes after, he heard the step of the other constable depart, and ere long there was a gentle tap at his door.

“Come in !” was his first reply ; but, instantly remembering his situation, he approached the door, and demanded, “Who is there ?”

“It is I, Master William !” answered the voice of the old housekeeper. Oh dear ! Oh dear ! to think of their accusing you of killing a man—you that were always as gentle as a lamb !”

“Do not speak so loud, Mrs Williams,” said the voice of the friendly constable. “I do not want the other man to hear you. He is a stranger in the place, and of course cannot feel for the old family as I can.”

“Well, well, Mr Thomson,” answered the old lady ; “I will speak low. You see that he does not come up stairs. Oh dear, Master William !” she proceeded ; “good Mr Thomson here says you eat nothing at all. Pray, do eat something.”

“I cannot, indeed, Mrs Williams,” replied the prisoner ; “but I shall be better to-morrow, and then I will. It is the first shock, you know, that is the worst. It will wear off in a day or two.”

As he spoke there was a slight noise, as of the key turning round in the lock, which was instantly caught by the quick ears of the constable. "You must not try to go in now; Mrs. Williams," he said. "It is against my strict orders."

"I am not trying to go in," she replied, somewhat crossly. "You would soon pull me out again, if I did. It was only my cap caught against the key, as I was stooping down to ask if he would have the soup. Master William," she continued, again addressing the prisoner, "are you there?—for I must not speak loud, he says—I have such a nice basin of soup for you, if I could but get you to *take it*."

William Delaware remarked again a slight noise at the keyhole, and thought that the good old lady laid a peculiar emphasis on the words "*take it*!" He replied, however,—“Indeed, Mary, “I cannot take any thing to-night.”

“Pray do!” she said, “Pray do! It is the best thing for you by far. Will you really not take it, Master William?”

As she spoke, he perceived the end of a small

piece of paper protruded gradually through the keyhole ; and it became evident, that the good old housekeeper, standing between the officer and the door, had contrived, without being detected, to insinuate through the aperture some written information from Captain Delaware's family. The prisoner instantly took a step forward, and laying hold of the little roll, drew it completely through, saying aloud, " Well, well ! I will take it, then."

" Ah, that is right !" cried the voice of the old lady, joyfully. " There is a good boy ! Do always what you are bid ! I will send the soup up as soon as ever it is warm !"

" Do so, and thank you !" replied the prisoner. " Tell Blanche and my father," he added, " that, as I am innocent, I doubt not my innocence will soon appear ; and bid them be of good heart."

The old lady bade God bless him, and went away ; and as soon as he had heard the constable seat himself again in the anteroom, he opened the paper he had received, and read the contents.

It began in the handwriting of the old house-

keeper, and had probably been written in the first instance without consultation with any one else ; but below there appeared a few lines from his father, which had evidently been added afterwards.

It began. “ Master William, do get away as fast as you can. Don’t stop, for God’s sake, to let those wicked people have their will. Remember the trapdoor under your bed, where you used to play at hide-and-seek when you were little. Master ordered it to be fastened up long ago ; but I had only one nail put in, for what was the use, you know. You can easy get the nail out, I am sure ; and there shall be a horse waiting for you at the back park gate at twelve o’clock to-night, and money and all to take you to foreign parts, till the conspiracy Miss Blanche says is against you, can be proved upon them. So, do now, for the love of Heaven !”

Beneath this epistle his father had written, in a hasty and tremulous hand—“ I sincerely think the above is the best plan you can follow. There is evidently a conspiracy against us ; and, as you have been selected for the victim, it is better for

you to make your escape while you can, than remain, and risk all that malice, wealth, art, and villainy, can do against you. Take the road to —, where there are always foreign vessels lying. Write to us when you are safe, under cover to Mr —, the trustee of your poor mother's little property. Fare-you-well, my dear boy, and God bless you ! S. D."

A new struggle now arose in the breast of the prisoner. The idea of flight had never suggested itself to his mind before ; and, though he had in truth lost all hope that his own innocence would prove his safety in the present instance, still the thought of giving additional weight to the charge against himself, by absconding, was painful. Yet his father advised it ; and it was more than probable that Sir Sidney had better means of knowing the peculiar dangers of his situation than he had himself. Aware of his own innocence, he felt, no doubt, that sooner or later he should be able to establish it beyond all question, if time were but allowed him. All he had to fear was, that, by the rapidity with which such transactions are

sometimes carried through, he might be condemned, and even executed, before some of those circumstances which time is sure eventually to disclose, could be discovered to prove him guiltless, and to fix their villainy upon his accusers.

It is wonderful how well the human mind reasons upon its own side of the question, when on the one hand is the prospect of an ignominious death, with but the remote hope of our innocence working a miracle in our favour, and, on the other, are presented the ready means of escape. Every one knows too well, that the law is not one of those lions that invariably lie down at the feet of virtue; and that, had poor Una, with such suspicions against her, met in the desert a law lion instead of a real one, the beast would infallibly have torn her in pieces. All this Captain Delaware knew. He had lost hope that his innocence would serve him; he was strongly urged by those who had the best opportunity of judging of his real situation; the means of escape were at hand, and he determined to make use of them.

Although he had been treated hitherto with great

lenity, he knew not how soon an order for searching him might come, and therefore he took means immediately to destroy the paper he had received. This was scarcely accomplished when the constable again appeared with the soup, and, as the door opened and shut, he saw lying on the floor of the anteroom a set of fetters. They were evidently not intended to be put upon his limbs that night, as the officer made no allusion to them ; but, had his intention of escaping even wavered, the sight of those badges of ignominy would have determined him from that moment.

“ I shall leave you the candle, Captain,” said the man, “ though I believe it is out of rule—and I have a notion that, all things considered, one of us ought to sleep in the room with you ; but, as that would not be agreeable to you I’m sure, we must get the old housekeeper to make us a shake-down in the outer room.”

“ I shall not forget your civility, Thomson,” said Captain Delaware ; “ and, as you are quite sure that it is not in my nature to commit such a crime as that with which these fellows charge me,

so you may be sure I shall some time have the means of thanking you better, when I have proved my innocence.

“I trust you may, Captain!—I am sure you may!” replied the man heartily; and, wishing him good-night, he left him.

His resolution being now taken, the means of putting it into execution became the next question. He looked round the room, and examined carefully every closet and drawer, in the hopes of finding some implement wherewith to extract the nail that fastened the trapdoor to which the letter referred, and which he well remembered having passed through as a boy a thousand times ere he went to sea. But his room had been thoroughly searched before he had been confined in it, and neither knife, nor gunscrew, nor tool of any kind, was to be found. “Perhaps I can get it out with my hands,” he thought; and, kneeling by his bed, he soon discovered the three boards in the dark oak flooring, that were contrived to play upon a hinge, and thus formed a trapdoor. It was close by the bedside, and, opening back against the edge of the bedstead, would have

given him exit at once if he could have found any thing with which to extract the nail, or rather nails ; for, notwithstanding Mrs Williams's assertion, there was apparently one in each of the boards. He gazed upon them for a moment in silence, thinking over every article of furniture that the room contained, in the hope of turning some one to the use he desired ; but it was in vain, and at length, taking a dollar from his purse, he slipped it partly between the boards, merely to see whether they were or were not strongly fastened down.

To his great surprise, they moved up easily by the effort he made, as far as the crown-piece could be brought to act as a lever. He immediately applied his hand to keep them in that position, and then slipping the silver a little farther down, raised them still higher. Another effort enabled him to interpose his fingers between the trapdoor and the flooring ; and it became evident at once, on a closer examination, that the single nail which had in reality fastened it down, had been lately pushed out—in all probability from below. The hole, which it had left in the beam, was still

fresh; and Captain Delaware now perceived that what he had taken for two other nails, were in fact merely nail-heads, driven in to make the several boards resemble each other. Gently replacing the trapdoor, he returned to the table, and sat down to indite a clear statement of the reasons which induced him to effect his escape without awaiting the event of his trial. Into this he wove the notes he had before written concerning the previous conduct of his accuser, and he boldly declared that he looked upon Lord Ashborough as the instigator, and the lawyer as the agent, in a premeditated scheme to destroy his family. To bear upon this point, he brought all the circumstances within his knowledge, and all the arguments he could make use of; and, after avowing his conviction that nothing but time would establish his innocence, he folded the paper, and addressed it to Dr Wilton and Mr Egerton. Before this was concluded, it was near eleven o'clock, and the only light that was allowed him was beginning to burn low. In order, therefore, to take advantage of it while it lasted, he approached the trap, and was about to raise it, when it suddenly occurred

to him that, in the letter he had just written, it might seem that he had shifted his ground of defence, since he had avowed in the morning that he believed Henry Beauchamp to have placed the money in his chamber ; and, turning back to the table, he sat down to explain that circumstance, and to desire that Beauchamp might be called upon to state whether he had done so or not. Luckily, as it happened, he did so ; for the moment after, with scarcely any noise, the door of his room opened, and the head of the other constable, who was a stranger in the town, appeared, looking in as if from some excited suspicion.

“ Oh, good-night Captain !” he said, “ I did not know whether you were asleep.”

“ Not yet,” replied Captain Delaware calmly ; “ but, as you are not asleep either, I wish you would get me another light, and some sealing-wax, as I want this letter to go early to-morrow to the magistrates.”

“ It’s no use, Captain, I am afraid,” replied the constable. “ Howsomdever, it shall go—but the boy as takes it, must be paid, you know.”

“ There is half a sovereign to pay him with,”

replied the prisoner; "keep the rest for your own trouble—and get me another light and some sealing-wax."

"Why, every one is a-bed but me, and I was just agoing," replied the man. "But I will see." So saying, he departed, but returned in a few minutes with another light, and a stick of sealing-wax; and, finding the prisoner still writing, he left him, telling him that he was just going to bed, but if he would push the letter under the door, it should be sent the first thing next morning.

Captain Delaware gladly saw him depart, and ere he had concluded, and sealed his letter, heard unequivocal signs of one at least of his jailers having fallen into a sound sleep. He listened anxiously, again and again, but all was silent in the house, except the dull, hard breathing of the constables, in the anteroom. It was now half-past eleven, and the hour at which the horse was to be at the back park gate was so near, that it became necessary to execute his design with promptitude; yet there was something painful in it altogether, which

made him linger a moment or two in his father's house, calling up its host of memories, and evoking from the dim night of time, the sweet and mournful spirit of the past.

He felt, however, that it was all in vain—that such thoughts but served to weaken him; and, taking up the light, he approached his bedside, and once more raised the trapdoor. The little ladder stood ready, just as it used to stand in the days of his childhood, and descending slowly, step by step, holding the light in one hand, and supporting the trapdoor in the other, he reached the last step but two or three, and then suffered the door to close over his head. The narrow cavity in which he now was, filled the centre of one of those internal buttresses, if I may use the term, into the masonry of which one of the back staircases of the old mansion was joisted. It was about six feet square in the inside, and at the first floor beneath his own, afforded a sort of landing-place, on which the ladder rested. Thence, again, a more solid stair of stone wound down to a sort of vault under the terrace, in which

was placed the great draw-well that supplied the house with the water principally used by the family.

When the trapdoor was closed, William Delaware, who was descending backwards, turned to look how many steps intervened between his feet and the ground, when, to his surprise, he found that the last step but one of the ladder, old and rotted by the damp, was broken through the middle, and offered, in the fresh yellow surface of the fracture, incontestable proofs that the way had been trod very lately by some other foot than his own. Over the floor of the landing-place, too, which that thriftless housewife Neglect had left covered with a thick coat of dust, might be traced three distinct steps from the mouth of the staircase; and the young fugitive at once saw that the way which had served to introduce the money into his chamber was now before him. That being the case, he felt that if his suspicions in regard to Mr Tims were true, the outlet might and would probably be watched; and, consequently, he determined to examine the whole

ground cautiously before he attempted to go out into the park.

Down the stairs, which were likewise covered with dust, he could trace the same alternate step coming up and going down again, but no other footmarks were to be seen, and it was evident that but one person had passed that way for years. The doors, however, which at different parts of the descent had been placed to guard that means of entrance, were now wide open ; and, descending to the vault or cellar in which the well was placed, William Delaware put out the light behind a pile of old bottles, that nearly covered the foot of the stairs, and then cautiously approached the door, underneath which a narrow line of pale moonlight was visible.

The door was sometimes padlocked, and it seemed so closely fastened, that the young sailor's heart began to fail him as he approached, but carelessness or the good old housekeeper had left no obstacles there ; and, as he drew it slowly towards him, it yielded to his hand without a sound, exposing to his sight, once more, all the

fine wild park scenery at the back of the mansion, lighted up by as glorious a moon as ever looked out through the blue sky upon the fair face of earth. For full five minutes, he paused and turned his eyes in every direction, but nothing was to be seen which could cause him the slightest apprehension; and throwing the door wider open, he considered which would be the nearest and the best covered way towards the gate at which the horse was to be stationed. At the western angle of the park, a sweep of old trees came within a hundred yards of the house, and thence a path wandered in amongst some large hawthorns and two or three splendid larches, leading down towards the glen in which the Prior's Well was situated. The gate which he wished to reach, indeed, lay somewhat to the east; but in order to proceed straight thither, he would have been obliged to cross a wide open piece of grassy ground, on which the moon was shedding a light nearly as clear as that of day, and which was commanded by every window in that side of the building.

Gliding along, then, under the terrace, and

bending—so that his head might not appear above it, he reached the opposite angle of the building, one of the old octagon towers of which threw out a long shadow, that fell upon the nearest trees, and mingled with the obscurity beneath them. Following this dark track, William Delaware walked quickly on, gained the shelter of the wood, and then, threading the well-known paths with a step of light, reached the dim glen which he had trod so lately with Burrel and his sister, and only paused, with the burning thirst of intense agitation, beside the old fountain, where, in the braggadocio spirit of a heart at ease, he had dared them to drink the icy waters of indifference.

“I may drink now myself, indeed!” he thought, as he filled the iron cup; but still he paused in raising it to his lips—gave his heart one moment to dream—conjured up as idle a hope as ever crossed the mind of man, and then tossed the cup back again into the well. And I should like to know if all the human race were brought, one by one, to the side of a fountain of such virtues as that—without a mortal eye to look on, and arm

their vanity against their affections—if there would be one being found in all the world so hapless—so hopeless—so without one sweet drop of feeling or of fancy—so destitute of life's ties and the heart's yearnings—as to raise the chilly waters irrevocably to their lips !

CHAPTER IX.

It is impossible to describe the joy and satisfaction with which the excellent people of Emberton had heard, that Mr Tims, the old miser at Ryebury, had been murdered. I do not, of course, mean to say that every one in the whole town had those enlarged and general views which made them take in at once all the infinite advantages, both moral and physical, which that event was likely to afford them. Some, indeed, only calculated upon the overflowing and inexhaustible source of bustle, excitement, surmise, and gossip, which was thus opened to them. Some fixed their thoughts upon the renown that Emberton would acquire throughout the realm, as the place

where the dreadful murder was committed, and others calculated upon wealth and emolument, from the number of visitors that it would bring to see the place. But only a few, of more vast and comprehensive minds, saw all these particulars in one general view, and rubbed their hands in great anticipations, as sharing in the sweet excitement of the moment, they talked over the murder with their neighbours, and added many bright touches from their own fancy to ornament the bloody deed.

The first news of the event that reached Emberton, had been conveyed by Farmer Ritson's hind, who supplied the old miser with his quotidian pennyworth of milk, and who had discovered the deed on applying in vain for admission. He alarmed his master, whose house was half a mile distant, and the good farmer instantly sent the intelligence to Emberton. The messenger's arrival took place just five minutes after Mr Tims junior had driven through the town on his way to the mansion at the park ; and as both Dr Wilton and Mr Egerton, the nearest magistrates, had passed the preceding evening and

night at Emberton, enquiring into some suspicious circumstances connected with the burning of Mrs Darlington's house, they were instantly called from their breakfast, and proceeded to examine into this fresh crime, which was destined to illustrate the annals of the neighbourhood.

They found the house at Ryebury already surrounded by a number of people ; and from amongst them various persons stepped forward to offer some little item of testimony ; but an unexpected visiter soon appeared in the person of the lawyer, who, on leaving the park, in not the most placable humour, ordered the postboy to drive to his uncle's house, and arrived just as the magistrates were about to leave the premises. No sooner did he hear of the event, than he determined if possible to involve the family of Sir Sidney Delaware in the consequences, and entered into an examination of the circumstances, which soon not only furnished him with the means of doing so, but also really convinced him that Captain Delaware was guilty of the crime that he proposed to impute to him. He at once laid his charge, and related the circumstances

of his late transaction with Sir Sidney Delaware's family, in his own particular way. He would fain, indeed, have involved the father too in the accusation he brought against the son; but his own clerk, and the sheriff's officer, distinctly stated before the magistrates, that it had been evident throughout, that Sir Sidney had not been aware, on their first arrival, that his son was in possession of the money necessary to pay the debt; and, for fear of spoiling a very hopeful case against Captain Delaware, the lawyer was obliged to abandon all charge against the baronet.

If the news of the murder alone, had so soothed and gratified each of those mixed feelings—the love of the marvellous—the passion for talking—and the general dislike to our fellow creatures, which all—combined with, or rather, as it were, imbedded in a soft stratum of vanity—enter into the spirit of gossiping; how much more were the good folks of Emberton delighted and stimulated when they heard the charge against Captain Delaware, and learned that the result of the coroner's inquest was a verdict of wilful murder against him. The reason why we are

so much better pleased when a person in our own or a superior station, commits a crime, or enacts a folly—why we tell it immediately to every one we meet, and aggravate it by our own comments—is probably, that a person in that rank having had as great advantages in circumstances and education as ourselves, our vanity has the full opportunity of complimenting us on not having done the same, without the necessity of admitting one deduction on the score of greater temptations, or inferior knowledge, which we are compelled to do, when the criminal is low, ignorant, or poor. The fact is, in all these cases, we make ourselves a bow on our own good behaviour, and the lowness of the bow depends upon the relative situation of the sinner or the fool over whom we crow.

Thus, when the matter came to be discussed at Emberton, every one cried out, “ Well, one would have thought that a young man of such hopes, and such an education as this Captain Delaware, would be the last to commit so dreadful a crime ! A poor ignorant wretch driven to vice from necessity one might have suspected ;

but not the son of a baronet, and a Master and Commander in the King's Navy !”

Amongst such speculations fled away the evening ; and, as we have said—although the people did not illuminate the town—the verdict of the coroner's jury certainly did make them as happy as the gossiping, envious, scandalous community of a little country town could be made. Early the next morning, however, just as the chaise which was to convey the prisoner to the county town was about to set out for his father's house, and as all the people of Emberton were preparing to turn out, and stare at him as he passed, a buzzing rumour began to spread abroad that Captain Delaware had escaped in the night.

“ Escaped !” cried the old maiden in the house at the corner of the bridge, letting fall the china cup from her hand as the maid announced the fatal intelligence. “ Escaped !—then we shall be all murdered in our beds ! Escaped !—why did they let the ruffian escape ?”

In a different manner did the mercer bear the tidings ; for, without replying one word to the shopboy who told him, he proceeded to carry the

news direct to the stationer's ; and, as he detailed it, he added, "So there can be no doubt of his guilt now !"

"There never was any ! There never was any !" replied the linen-draper in the same charitable spirit. "But you have heard that wild Wat Harrison, the widow's son, has not been seen or heard of for two or three days, and that there are manifold suspicions"——

"To be sure ! To be sure ! Those Delawares were always fond of him," replied the mercer. "He sailed with this very Captain you know ; and it seems he has been under his orders once too often. I always said he would come to be hanged !"

While such charitable conversation was passing at Emberton, the magistrates were not inactive ; warrants, horses, and constables were despatched in all directions, and both Dr Wilton and Mr Egerton, well knowing the blame that would attach to themselves, returned to the mansion to investigate by what means the prisoner had escaped. The constables in whose charge he had been left, and the room which he had

occupied, were first examined. The two men declared upon oath, that no one had been admitted to the accused but themselves, since he had been remanded—that they had both slept in the anteroom—that the door had been locked all night—that the window was far too high to afford the means of evasion—and that they had both seen and spoken to Captain Delaware as late as eleven the preceding night. The inferior constable at the same time handed the fugitive's letter to Dr Wilton, who opened and read it, while Mr Egerton made the first superficial examination of the room; and, as his fellow magistrate was about to institute a more rigorous investigation, the clergyman exclaimed. "Stay stay, Mr Egerton this letter concerns us both, and in it William Delaware alludes, in some measure, to the method of his intended escape!"

"See here! He says the officers are entirely guiltless of it, as it is by a passage they are not acquainted with."

"Then there must be some private entrance," said Mr Egerton.

"I dare say there is," answered Dr Wilton;

“ but this letter, in many points, throws some new light upon the subject. Read it ! Read it ! and, at all events, let us, as far as we can, do the poor boy justice. Read it, my dear sir !”

Mr Egerton took it to the window, and read it attentively over. He then gave the letter back to Dr Wilton, saying, “ He makes out a good case against his accuser ; but I am afraid, my dear doctor, that it will not screen himself. However, on every account—for charity’s sake, and the sake of mere justice, I will of course exert myself to the utmost—that is to say, quietly—quietly you know, for the matter is nearly out of our hands—but I will exert myself to the utmost to discover every fact connected with the charge. In the mean time, we must do our duty, and endeavour to recover our prisoner. Let us examine the walls.”

“ First examine the floor,” said Dr Wilton. “ Sliding panels have not been to be found since the epoch of Udolpho ; but trapdoors are to be met with in all these old houses.”

The hint was instantly complied with ; and the trapdoor was discovered at once, together with its

communication with the park. Nothing farther, however, could be made of this fact. The way the fugitive had taken, remained still undiscovered; and the only effect which their investigation produced upon the minds of the two magistrates was, that each perceived at once that the means which Captain Delaware had taken to make his escape, might very well have served another person for the purpose of placing the money in his chamber unseen; and thus his tale acquired a degree of probability which it had not before possessed.

When the examination was concluded, as far as it could be carried at the time, and every necessary measure for overtaking the fugitive had been put in train for execution, Mr Eger-ton went back to Emberton to confer with the coroner, who was hourly expected to return to that little town, in order to see the prisoner despatched to the county jail. Dr Wilton, in the meanwhile, laying aside his magisterial capacity, proceeded, as a friend and a clergyman, to visit Sir Sidney Delaware and his daughter. He found them, as he had expected, depressed in

the extreme, and saw that they were naturally in a high state of nervous anxiety in regard to Captain Delaware's safety. At first there was a degree of painful embarrassment in the whole deportment of Sir Sidney Delaware, which made him treat even Dr Wilton with no small haughtiness and reserve. But the good clergyman came to console and to sooth ; and he persevered with all those kindly and feeling attentions, which are sure ultimately to win their way to an amiable heart, however much the road thither may be obstructed by the pride of undeserved shame, or the reckless repulsiveness of bitter disappointment.

When he found Sir Sidney unwilling to listen, impatient of consolation, or heedless of conversation, he turned to Blanche, and won her into the innocent manœuvre of wiling her father from his bitterer thoughts. Gradually the feelings of the baronet relaxed : he was brought more and more to speak of his own sorrows, and of his son's unhappy fate ; and though a tear or two forced themselves through his eyelids, his griefs and even his apprehensions—as is sometimes the

case—were partly lost as they were poured forth into a friendly ear.

We must do justice to all, however. Dr Wilton was not the only friend who came to sooth and console the unhappy family at Emberton Park; and the person who next appeared was certainly one whom they did not expect to see. It was Mrs Darlington, who had lately taken a house at the distance of about ten miles. After spending a part of the preceding day at Emberton, she had returned to her dwelling, in no small horror at the charge which she heard had been brought against her young friend, William Delaware.

Now Mrs Darlington, as we have shown before, was not without her foibles and absurdities, but withal she had a far greater share of real goodness of heart, and of the milk of human kindness, than generally falls to the lot of that amphibious class called very good sort of people. It must also be remarked, that though she was in no degree very brilliant, and only made herself ridiculous by the smattering of pretty accomplishments which she possessed,

yet there was a certain rectitude of understanding about her, which, in early years, taking the form of tact, enabled her to assume at once the tone of a society above the rank in which she was born ; and which, in after life, had often guided her to just conclusions, when people without half her little weaknesses, and who pretended to ten times her abilities, were all in the wrong.

In the present instance, no sooner did she hear of the accusation against Captain Delaware, than, from her previous knowledge of his character, she pronounced it at once to be perfect nonsense ; and when Dr Wilton informed her that he and Mr Egerton had remanded the young officer on suspicion, she merely asked, “ How they could be so foolish ? ” The coroner’s inquest produced no other effect. She still pronounced it all nonsense together ; and quietly declared to her maid that she was sure it would ultimately be found that the people who had murdered the poor old man were the very same who had set fire to her house, and carried off her plate.

The worthy lady, however, passed the whole of that evening and the next morning in a state of considerable perturbation. She was a great stickler for proprieties—hated every thing in the world that made a noise—liked a small lion, it is true, but had a great aversion to a bear, even if, like a late learned Grecian, it affected to be a lion solely on the strength of being a wild beast—and finally, she did not at all approve of personages who were in any way doubtful. All this operated strongly upon the prudential organs of her cerebral development, and would have induced her to stay at home quietly, and watch the course of events in regard to the Delaware family, had not the goodness of heart we have spoken of, and the rectitude of judgment which established Captain Delaware's innocence in her mind beyond all manner of doubt, both pressed her strongly forward to show countenance and kindness to the ruined family in their distress.

There was a considerable struggle for it, however, in her own mind ; but, nevertheless, at ten o'clock, she again declared that it was all non-

sense together, and ordered the chariot as soon as possible.

By this time her resolution was taken ; and, stepping lightly in, she ordered the coachman to drive to Emberton Park.

It is not impossible that on her arrival she might have been denied admittance—for just inasmuch as one never knows all the coldness of the general world till one tries it, one does not know the kindness of the exceptions either—but, without any questions, she walked out of the carriage, and, tripping across the hall with a step a good deal too juvenile, she entered the library unannounced.

Sir Sidney bowed with stately formality ; but Blanche, who understood the whole business better, exclaimed, while the bright tears rose in her eyes, “ Oh, Mrs Darlington, this is very kind of you indeed ! ”

“ Not at all, my dear Blanche ! Not at all ! ” replied Mrs Darlington, in her usual quick but little meaning manner. “ Where is your brother ? I am resolved to see him, and tell him how foolish I think all the magistrates of the county

have grown together. Beg your pardon, Dr Wilton; but it is true indeed!"

"You cannot see him, madam, I am afraid," replied Dr Wilton gravely; "for he has made his escape from confinement."

"Oh, dear! I am very glad to hear it," she replied. "You surely would not have had him stay in a nasty filthy prison for two or three weeks, because a great rogue chose to accuse him of a crime nobody believes he committed. I am very glad to hear it indeed!"

The good lady then paused for a moment; and perceiving that, although her avowal of disbelief in regard to Captain Delaware's guilt had been not a little pleasing to his father, Sir Sidney still remained sad and depressed, she turned to him, kindly saying, "Come, come, Sir Sidney, I will not have you look so gloomy. You are as careworn as if your son were really guilty; and as we all know very well that he is not, you should make yourself quite sure that he will easily be able to cause his innocence to appear. But I have laid out a little scheme for you and Blanche. I have nobody staying

with me in my new house, and the place is quite quiet. You will do nothing here but grow dull and melancholy, and I will have you get into the chariot with me, and come away and spend a week or two, till all this is settled."

Although Sir Sidney Delaware felt that the invitation was most kind, and in his own dwelling experienced that sickening disgust which one feels towards all once-loved things, when some fatal change has poisoned them with bitter associations, yet he declined Mrs Darlington's offer on his own part, though he much pressed his daughter to accept it. Blanche, however, refused to leave her father; and the matter would have ended thus, had not Mrs Darlington discovered that one great motive in Sir Sidney's desire to remain at his own dwelling, at least for that night, was to hear the first news brought by the messengers despatched to intercept his son.

As soon as she found how much weight this had upon him, she proposed to go forward with Dr Wilton to Emberton, and there hear all that had been done, in her own business: after

which, she said, she would return at six o'clock for Sir Sidney and his daughter, who must have received tidings from the three county towns to which officers had been despatched.

Some slight difficulties having been discussed and overcome, this plan was agreed to. Mrs Darlington and Dr Wilton departed; and the fact that Mrs Darlington had visited the ruined family at Emberton, having been ascertained, by the appearance of her carriage rolling down the avenue from the house, threw the town into a state of agitation which might have afforded matter of envy to the Arch-Agitator himself.

In the meanwhile, the various messengers charged with the warrants against Captain William Delaware, proceeded towards their destinations. It may be only necessary to follow one of them, however; as all the rest, being sent in various wrong directions, might have gone onward in a direct line till they met at the antipodes, without setting eyes upon William Delaware. The one, then, who was directed to ride with all speed to the seaport town of ———, and having got his warrant

backed by the proper authorities, to search for and take the person of the accused, arrived in that place at about two o'clock of the afternoon ; and, finding that no less than five foreign vessels had sailed that day at high water, which took place at eight of the clock, he proceeded, as he had been directed, to enquire at the offices of all the foreign vice-consuls what passports had been granted during the morning.

The consuls and their clerks were as civil as possible, and the names and descriptions were read over to him ; but the poor man might as well have been in Babel, such a confused multitude of unchristianlike christian names were pronounced in his ears. His next attempt was at the descriptions ; but he found that, during that one morning, people of all colours and complexions, of all ages and sizes, of all features and professions, had sailed for foreign parts, or obtained their passports, which was quite as good ; and therefore, bewildered and in despair, he gave up the search ; and, having committed his charge to the constables of the place, once more mounted and returned to Emberton.

These tidings were balm to the hearts of Sir Sidney and Blanche Delaware, but were not quite so pleasing to the people of Emberton, who next to a murder enjoyed a hanging—which, indeed, is generally much the same thing. Another messenger, however, arrived about the same time, who brought news which somewhat diverted their attention. This was the man who had been sent the day before to London, by Dr Wilton, in search of Mr Beauchamp, and who was a shrewd intelligent fellow, not likely to miss the track of any one he sought for. But the tidings he brought back imported, that Mr Beauchamp had never reached his house in town; and that, along the whole line of road, no person resembling him had either fed a horse, taken a post-chaise, mounted a stage, or entered an inn for the last four days.

Every one opened their eyes; and the people of Emberton all went to bed with the consolatory reflection that Mr Beauchamp, or rather Mr Burrel, as they termed him, must undoubtedly have been murdered also. Dr Wilton was himself uneasy. Sir Sidney Delaware said

that the absence of Henry Beauchamp was most unfortunate on many accounts; but Blanche turned deadly pale when she heard the tidings, and the vague apprehensions by which they were accompanied; and it would require no great skill in the book of the human heart to read the silent commentary that went on in her own bosom, on the unexplained absence of one she dearly loved.

CHAPTER X.

EXACTLY three days after the arrival of Mr Peter Tims at Emberton, and the discovery of his uncle's murder, the Right Honourable the Earl of Ashborough was sitting at his breakfast-table, in his house of Parmouth Hall, in the county of ——. It was a rainy morning, and over the whole face of the country there was a dim sort of ground-glass haze, which cut off all the far prospect from view, leaving even those objects that were near, nothing but an indistinct aspect of drippingness, not at all consolatory to those who had laid out their expeditions for the day. Though a very regular man in his habits, Lord Ash-

borough had a notion that fires were made to warm people, and that people might very well be cold in the beginning of October, so that, in addition to the glossy damask, and the splendid china, and the burnished silver, and all those other things, which, as we have before observed, make an English breakfast something far superior to any other meal eaten in any other place in the world, there was the bright and blazing fire in the polished grate, setting itself up in eternal opposition to the rain without.

At one end of the table sat the earl, with his whole person in high preservation, just as it came from the hands of his valet. At the other end sat Maria Beauchamp, his niece, in all the full blow of youth and beauty, fashion and good taste. By the side of Miss Beauchamp sat two gentlemen, the Honourable Colonel ——, and Mr ——, whose names are not worth the trouble of writing, as I never intend to mention them again. Suffice it that they were guests of Lord Ashborough's; the first being a gentleman who, the noble lord thought, would do

very well for his niece, and the second a gentleman who thought the noble lord's niece would do very well for him. Maria differed from both ; and, in short, thought very little of the two personages at all ; though the one poured a continual stream of idleness into her ear which amused her, and the other made love by being profoundly silent, which amused her as much.

“ Either we have breakfasted early, or the post is late,” said Lord Ashborough ; and one of the other gentleman was replying something quite as significant, when a servant brought in the post-bag, and delivered it formally into his lordship's hands. Lord Ashborough immediately distributed the letters and newspapers ; and as breakfast was by this time nearly over, and the after humdrum commencing, each gentleman put his letters in his pocket, and opened his newspaper.

“ Hum !—Hum !” said the Colonel, running his eye over the columns—“ Hum ! Horrid murder ! We will keep that for a *bonne bouche*, I think. What are funds ?”

“ Hum !—Hum !” said Mr ——. “ Hum—Horrid murder ! — Hum ! — ’Pon my honour,

Colonel, the Draper has won the match against the Grand Signor !”

“ Ha !” said Lord Ashborough, “ Ha ! The French, I see, have persuaded the English that they have not the slightest intention of keeping possession of Algiers—and the English believe them. Let us see what will be the case this time three years—Ha ! Horrid murder ! Good God !—his throat cut from ear to ear !—Let us see—Coroner’s inquest—Wilful murder against—Why, Maria, here is a cousin of ours been committing murder !—He will be hung to a certainty, my love ; and you will be obliged all the winter to wear deep mourning for his offences.”

“ And pray, sir, who is the gentleman ?” demanded Miss Beauchamp. You know I have so many cousins, and uncles, and such distant relations, that I cannot be expected to remember them all, even when one of them commits a murder.”

“ Oh ! it is very possible, so careless a young lady may have forgot him !” replied Lord Ashborough, somewhat piqued at the tone of her answer ; “ but you have seen him within this

month—It is Captain William Delaware—the son of the man at Emberton, who has been cutting the throat of an old miser at—at—at—a place called Ryebury—I think it is.”

Miss Beauchamp turned very pale, but, without reply, raised the coffee-cup towards her lips. Ere it reached them, however, it dropped from her hand, and dashed some of the china to pieces by its fall, while the young lady herself sank back, fainting in her chair, much to the horror and consternation of every one present.

Lord Ashborough started up, and advanced to his niece's assistance; Mr —— kneeled by her side, and supported her head; while Colonel ——, who was a tall stiff man, rose up, like the geni coming out of the copper vessel—that is to say, by degrees—and rang the bell.

Miss Beauchamp was conveyed speedily to her own room; and the excellent Colonel exclaimed, “Why, Ashborough, this murder which your cousin has committed, seems to affect Miss Beauchamp more than yourself!”

“I had forgot,” replied Lord Ashborough, “that she and her brother were almost brought up with

those Delawares in their childhood. As to myself, the matter does not affect me at all, Colonel—I always thought that some catastrophe of the kind would take place. The father—who was both at school and at college with me—was always one of those violent, ruthless, unprincipled men, on whose conduct you could never calculate; and as he was generally in scrapes and difficulties, you know, temptation might assail him at any moment. The son seemed, from the little I have ever seen of him, a boy of the same disposition. Heaven knows,” he added, with an air of modest candour, “I acted in as liberal a manner as possible towards them! It was only the other day that I accepted a mere trifle, in lieu of an annuity of two thousand a-year which I held, payable upon their estates.”

“Scamps!” said the Colonel, walking towards the window. “One never makes any thing of scamps. When one has any poor relations—and I suppose every one has some—the best way is to cut them at once—one never makes any thing of scamps!”

“Mr Tims, my lord, waiting in the library,”

said a servant entering, just as the Colonel concluded his sensible, comprehensive, and charitable observation.

“Not the ghost of the murdered man, I hope!” cried Mr —, who had been reading the report of the coroner’s inquest.

“No; but the body of his nephew, I suppose,” replied Lord Ashborough. “You had better try the billiard-room, gentlemen, as the day is so bad;” and he proceeded to the library, where he was awaited by Mr Peter Tims, dressed in what the newspapers call a suit of decent mourning, with a countenance made to match, according to the tailor’s term.

Lord Ashborough nodded, and Mr Tims bowed low as they met; and the peer, letting himself sink into an easy-chair, began the conversation by saying, “I suppose, Mr Tims, I must condole with you on your uncle’s death?”

“I have much need of condolence on many accounts, my lord,” replied the lawyer; “but I have one happiness, which is, that while your lordship is pleased to condole with your humble

servant, he has an opportunity of congratulating you."

"Why, indeed, things seem to have turned out luckily," replied Lord Ashborough; "but I am not yet half informed of what has occurred—all I know is from a brief account in the newspapers."

"If your lordship is at liberty," said the lawyer, "I will explain the whole;" and he forthwith set to work, and recounted all the principal events which had happened, since he last left Lord Ashborough; contriving, however, to take almost as much credit to himself for all that had happened, as if he had cut his uncle's throat himself, on purpose to ruin the family of Sir Sidney Delaware.

Lord Ashborough listened, and smiled with triumph, as Mr Tims, pandering to his malignity, dwelt upon the agony of Sir Sidney Delaware, and the pain and shame of his gallant son—upon the inevitable ruin that must overtake their whole race—and upon the probable consequences to the unfortunate baronet's health. The smile,

however, soon faded away ; and, strange to say, that though hatred to Sir Sidney Delaware had been the predominant passion of Lord Ashborough's existence, though the knowledge that he was leading a life of comparative poverty, had been one of his greatest pleasures ; and the hope of ruining him utterly, an object that the earl had never lost sight of—yet now that it was all accomplished—that it was done—that he was trodden under his feet, and presented to his eyes, heartbroken and desolate, ruined and disgraced, the joy passed away in that evanescent smile of triumph—the delight lasted but a moment, and left a vacancy in his desires.

Why it was so, we cannot be called upon to prove. It is a fact in the heart's natural history, and that is all that we have to do with it. It might be, indeed, that Othello's occupation was gone ; and that Lord Ashborough, in accomplishing his purpose, had dried up a source of thought and gratification. It might be, that he was like Bruce at the fountains of the Nile—that all which had lured him on, through a dangerous and intricate way, was obtained ; and that he had

nothing to lead him farther, or to guide him back. It might be that, as usual, conscience took advantage of the sudden lassitude of satiety, to smite the heart, for the very gratifications that were palling upon the appetite.

“ Well, Mr Tims ! Well ! ” he said at length. “ All this is very fortunate. But, pray, may I ask how is it that you lay claim to so much subject of condolence ? If I have understood you right, your uncle’s death could be no matter of very inconsolable grief to you—though, doubtless, you might have preferred another manner.”

“ No, my lord, no ! ” replied Mr Tims. “ It is not that at all. He was an old man—a very old man—one would have thought that death had forgot him—and, to tell the truth, it was perhaps as well for him to die a quick as a lingering death ; and I hear, when the carotid artery is cut, as it was in his case, a man cannot suffer above a second or two. But as I was saying, my lord, it was not either of his death or of the manner that I was thinking, but the murderer must have carried away full twelve

thousand pounds in money, besides the sum destined to pay your lordship's note"——

"Which, by the way, I hope you have paid into the hands of my banker?" interrupted Lord Ashborough, whose first thought was, of course, of himself.

"Why, not yet, my lord—not yet!" replied the attorney. "The law has yet to decide to whom it belongs, my lord."

"How, sir!" cried Lord Ashborough, reddening, "To whom can it belong but to me? Was it not paid to you on my account?"

"Beg pardon, my lord! Beg pardon!" replied Mr Tims. "But, whichever way it goes, your lordship cannot be a loser. If it be proved, as it can be proved, that the money was stolen from my uncle, the payment to you of course is null, and the money belongs to me, as sole heir of the late Mr Tims of Ryebury. But then, my lord—hear me, my lord, I beg—the whole transaction with Sir Sidney Delaware is null also, and you will be able to recover at common law!"

Lord Ashborough's face again lighted up, and it is very possible that the thought of pursuing

his game still farther, and hunting it to the death, might add not a little to his placability. "We must have counsel's opinion as to the best means to be employed," he said. "This young ruffian, you tell me, has escaped, and of course the prosecution must drop, unless he can be apprehended."

"Oh no, my lord, no!" answered Mr Tims. "That does not follow at all—there are indeed various modes of proceeding, on which it would be advisable to consult some common law barrister; but, in the mean time, the money is quite secure—so much so, indeed, that if your lordship likes it to be paid into your bankers"—

"Why, Mr Tims," said Lord Ashborough, thoughtfully. "I think it might be as well, you know."

"Well, my lord, I am quite ready to do so," answered the lawyer, "on your making over to me your claims against Sir Sidney Delaware, and his estate of Emberton."

Lord Ashborough started, "No, no!" he cried. "No!—at all events, we will speak of that hereafter. Cannot a bill of outlawry be pursued

against this young man—and ought he not to be dismissed from his Majesty's service? I have a great mind to return to town, and see about the whole business, Mr Tims. I dare say, I can get rid of these two men who are staying here, by the day after to-morrow; and, in the mean time, you had better go back to Emberton, and urge the pursuit as actively as possible. It is not probable that he can have got out of the country so soon! Why do you not send for officers from Bow Street?"

"They are already on the scent, my lord," replied the man of law; "and I doubt not that they will catch him ere he gets far. Murder is a crime which all civilized nations will agree in punishing—and as to the money, my lord"——

"Oh, I doubt not it is safe! I doubt not it is safe!" replied Lord Ashborough, "When I come to town, we must take counsel as to the best method of recovering it, as speedily as possible, from Sir Sidney Delaware."

"Oh, it is quite safe, depend on it!" answered Mr Tims, "I was only going to say, that I am likely to be the only loser in this business;

as the twelve thousand pounds are, I am afraid, lost for ever."

"I hope not, Mr Tims, I hope not!" replied the earl; "and if they be, we must endeavour to make it up to you, some other way. I do not of course mean to say, that I can take upon me to pay the money, as you see I am likely to be a loser by the whole transaction myself."

"I think not, my lord, indeed," replied the lawyer. "Beg your lordship's pardon; but I think you are likely to be a great gainer."

"How so, sir?" demanded the peer with open eyes. "I gain nothing, and lose at least the law expenses."

"Why, my lord," replied the lawyer, "I think in default of issue-male, on the part of Sir Sidney Delaware, you stand next in the entail; now, if we can convict this young man who has committed the murder, you of course succeed."

"Ay! but suppose we cannot catch him," cried the earl, his face brightening at the thoughts of the reversion.

“Perhaps we can do without, my lord,” answered Mr Tims. “I am much mistaken if, upon due cause, the law, deprived of the power of dealing real death, will not pronounce a criminal legally dead; and I think that were I certain I should not be a loser, I could bring forward a sufficient case to ensure that result.”

“Mr Tims,” said Lord Ashborough solemnly, laying his hand with a dignified gesture upon a book that lay before him. “Mr Tims, I can assure you, that no one who wishes me well shall ever lose a farthing by me. I think you must know the fine—I might say the fastidious—sense of honour which I entertain, and I promise you upon my word, that if you succeed in carrying through the very just and reasonable design you propose, and establish me as heir of entail to the Emberton property, I will make you full compensation for whatever loss you may have sustained in the course of this business.”

“Say no more, my lord! Say no more!” replied Mr Tims. “We will find means either to

catch and hang him at once, or to cut him off from performing any legal act ; and in the mean time—as life is always uncertain—I will, with your lordship’s permission, draw up a little document for your lordship to sign, purporting that you will, on your succession to the Emberton estate, indemnify me for the losses I have sustained, by the robbery of my uncle’s house.”

Already Lord Ashborough began to repent of his liberal promise, and to consider whether he could not have done quite as well without the agency of Mr Tims ; but, as it appeared that the chief proofs of Captain Delaware’s guilt were in the lawyer’s hands, he thought it better to adhere strictly to his engagement, and therefore signified his assent.”

“ Of course, my lord,” continued the lawyer, “ you will find it necessary to proceed against Sir Sidney Delaware immediately, either at common law for the recovery of the sum agreed to be paid by bill, and which cannot be considered as paid, the money wherewith it was satisfied having been stolen ; or else to proceed by petition in the Court of Chancery, in order to recover possession of the

original annuity deed, the authenticated copy of which is in my possession, praying also that the rents of the Emberton estate may be paid into court, till such time as judgment be pronounced."

The lawyer spoke these hard purposes in a tone of significance, which would have been an insult to any one with whose inmost thoughts he was not so well acquainted as he was with those of Lord Ashborough; but the earl heard him with a meaning smile, and replied, "Why really, Mr Tims, you seem inclined to be rather hard-hearted towards this Sir Sidney Delaware."

"Your lordship would not have me very tender towards a man whose son has murdered my only relation," replied the lawyer; "and besides, law has nothing to do with tenderness; and as your lordship's agent, I am bound to suggest what I think the best legal means of protecting your interests."

"Certainly, certainly!" answered the earl. "Far be it from me to blame you, my good sir. Follow which plan you judge best—both if you please!"

"Both be it then, my lord!" replied Mr Tims,

rubbing his hands at the interminable prospect which the case held out, of pleas and papers without end—an universe of parchment, and a heaven of red tape. “Both be it then, my lord!—There is not the slightest reason that we should not proceed in both courts at once, to make all sure; and if, before two months are over, Sir Sidney Delaware be not as completely beggared as ever man was, the English law will be very much changed—that is all that I can say.—Unless, indeed,” he added thoughtfully, “your lordship’s worthy nephew come to his aid—marry Miss Delaware, and advance money to defend her father.”

“No fear! No fear!” replied Lord Ashborough. “He will not marry her, depend upon it.”

“Why, my lord, I am afraid,” said Mr Tims; “that is to say, I have heard it very strongly reported in Emberton, that he did propose to Miss Delaware, and that she refused him, not knowing who he was. She and her father are now staying with the lady at whose house she first met Mr Beauchamp; they are very likely to meet

again—he to declare his real name, and she to accept him; for you may imagine, after all that has happened, she will be glad enough to get married at all—and you know how romantic he is in some things, though he strives to hide it.”

“You are mistaken, Mr Tims!” said Lord Ashborough. “What has happened will make her persist in her refusal more steadily than ever.”

Though hating Sir Sidney Delaware and his whole family with the bitterest enmity, Lord Ashborough knew them well, and understood the principles upon which they acted—for the basest heart will sometimes, in a great degree, appreciate a more noble one. This appreciation, however, is never candidly admitted, even to the heart itself; and while, from a secret conviction of the truth, it often calculates justly the results—comprehends in a moment what will be the effect of particular circumstances—and makes use of that knowledge for its own selfish purposes—it is sure to attribute all good actions to base and mean motives, even in its own secret thoughts, and to give them false and evil names in conversation with others.

“ No, no, Mr Tims !” he said, “ What has happened will make her refuse him more steadily than ever, if she have a drop of her father’s blood in her veins. I know those Delawares well, and their cursed pride, which they fancy to be fine feeling and generous sentiment. If it were to save her father and her whole family from destruction, depend upon it, she would not marry any man while she thought that her brother’s infamy was to be a part of her dowery.— I might say her only dowery ; for I suppose the pittance she had from her mother has been swallowed up long ago. No, no ! all is very safe there. Maria, who has heard a good deal about her from her brother’s old tutor, let me unwittingly into the secret, that she is her father over again in those respects ; but sting her irritable pride, and you can make her do any thing.”

“ Well, my lord, well !” said Mr Tims. “ If your lordship be sure, I, of course, have nothing to say. Only, I cannot understand any woman refusing a gentleman of Mr Beauchamp’s present wealth and future expectations. I cannot understand it, indeed !”

“ I dare say not ! ” replied Lord Ashborough drily. “ But in the meanwhile, Mr Tims, I think you had better return to Emberton to-night. It is not much above thirty miles. Proceed as earnestly as possible against the son, and after putting matters in train there, come up and meet me in London on Monday next.”

“ At the same time, my lord,” said the lawyer, “ I will serve all the tenants with notice not to pay their rents to Sir Sidney Delaware ; ” and this being agreed to with a smile, Lord Ashborough rejoined his guests, and Mr Tims proceeded to hold a serious consultation with the house-keeper, over a cold pasty and a glass of sherry, ere he once more set out for Emberton.

CHAPTER XI.

Now, the very same character might be given of Mr Peter Tims of Clement's Inn, attorney-at-law, as that which Voltaire, in his *Discours à l'Academie*, gives of the President de Montesquieu—"C'etoit un génie mâle et rapide qui approfondit tout en paraissant tout effleurer;" and in several of his late conversations with Lord Ashborough, he had penetrated into the depths of that nobleman's thoughts and feelings, while he seemed to give explicit credit to his lightest words. He saw, therefore, that there were two strong principles which worked the whole machine; the chief springs, as it were, of all his lordship's conduct, at least on the present occasion. The one of these principles was, it is true, a little

stronger than the other; and the two were, revenge and avarice; the latter succumbing somewhat to the former, but both at present working very well together.

There are certain classes of passions and vices which people often find an excuse for indulging, by persuading themselves that they are invariably connected with some great or noble feeling or other. Now, of this character is revenge, which men are apt to fancy must be the offspring of a generous and vehement heart, and a fine, determined, sensitive mind. But this is all a mistake. Revenge, in the abstract, is merely a prolongation throughout a greater space in time, of that base selfishness which leads us to feel a momentary impulse to strike any thing that hurts or pains us either mentally or corporeally; and the more brutal, and animal, and beastlike be the character of the person, the greater will be his disposition to revenge. But we must speak one moment upon its modifications. Revenge always proceeds either from a sense of real injury, or a feeling of wounded vanity. It seldom, however, arises from any real injury; and where it does,

it would, (if possible to justify it at all,) be more justifiable ; but, in this modification, a corrective is often found in the great mover of man's heart ; and vanity itself whispers, it will seem nobler and more generous to forgive. The more ordinary species of revenge, however, and the more filthy, is that which proceeds from wounded vanity—when our pride or our conceit has been greatly hurt—not alone in the eyes of the world, but in our own eyes—when the little internal idol that we have set up to worship in our own hearts, has been pulled down from the throne of our idolatry, and we have been painfully shown that it is nothing but a thing of gilt wood. Then, indeed, revenge, supported by the great mover of man's heart, instead of being corrected by it, is insatiable and everlasting. But in all cases, instead of being connected with any great quality, it is the fruit of a narrow mind, and a vain selfish heart.

The latter of the two modifications was that which affected Lord Ashborough, and it had remained with him through life ; but Mr Tims very evidently saw, that as soon as his lordship

imagined his revenge to have nothing left to feed upon, it of course became extinct ; and that his own employment at least, in any very extensive business, as far as Lord Ashborough was concerned, would be at an end. The avarice, too, would come into play ; and the worthy lawyer perceived that it was necessary to keep alive his appetite for vengeance, and at the same time to take care that his admirable patron's avarice should be broken in to run in harness with his own.

These were his motives for suggesting the course of proceeding which he had insinuated might be pursued, although he felt very doubtful as to the legal possibility of carrying on the matter exactly as prosperously as he had taught his patron to believe. At all events, he felt that this was his best chance, not only of keeping possession of the money he had already got, but of obtaining the twelve thousand pounds more, which, together with the rest of his uncle's property, he felt would raise him to a station in society in which he might—not pause—but make more still.

After satisfying the cravings of hunger, therefore, and thinking that the time might soon come

when the earl himself would find it necessary to treat him with more attention, Mr Tims got into his chaise, humming the chorus of the Little Ploughboy—

“ So great a man—so great a man—so great a man I’ll be ! ”

And once more rolled away towards Emberton, resolved instantly to see Sir Sidney Delaware, and to embroil the whole affair as much as possible.

His clerk had been left behind at the little town to take care of the business during his absence ; and although it was late ere the lawyer returned, he instantly set him to work to prepare notices to all the tenants of Sir Sidney Delaware not to pay their rents. This he knew was a bold stroke ; but looking upon the unhappy baronet as an enemy in time of war, he knew that one great object was to cut off his supplies. Early the next morning Mr Tims sallied forth to make a general round of the tenants, and proceeded to a farmhouse, from the crowded stackyard and busy aspect of which he argued a large and prosperous farm. The farmer

himself appeared superintending the thatching in the yard; and Mr Tims, notice in hand, stepped up to him, and informed him of his business.

As the honest man read, his mouth expanded wide across his rosy face, with a grin of satisfaction, which Mr Tims remarked as something extraordinary at least. "Sorry, sir, I can't oblige you!" said the farmer, eyeing him with a look of merry contempt. "I paid my rent to Sir Sidney yesterday morning. I thought just now—as he is in trouble I hear with some bit of a blackguard lawyer of the name of Tims—he might want the money, you know. So I took it up to the good lady's house where he is stopping, seeing it was due on the twenty-fifth o' last month."

"Oh, you have paid it, have you?" said Mr Tims. "Then I can tell you, most likely you will have it to pay over again."

"Pay it over again!" cried the farmer, who easily divined who the person was that spoke to him. "Pay it over again! Come, come, none of your gammon, master, or I'll break your head for you, and that is all the payment you'll get

from me. Who should I pay my rent to but my own landlord? and a good landlord he has always been, and a kind—never racked us up to the last farthing, like some o' them, though he wanted the money enough himself. I'll tell you what, you had better not say a word against him or his—and if you be one of Lawyer Tims's clerks, bid him not show his face among us here, or he'll get such a licking as will serve him for a long while."

While this conversation was proceeding between Mr Peter Tims and the farmer, a considerable number of the farm-servants had gathered round their master, and very unequivocal signs and symptoms were given as to their sense of the matter. Various words, too, were heard, which sounded harsh upon the tympanum of Peter Tims's ear, such as—"I shouldn't wonder if it were Lawyer Tims himself—A looks like a lawyer—let's duck um in the horsepond—or cart him into the muck."

Now Peter Tims was, in a certain degree, a coward; and although he could have made up his mind to be knocked down by the farmer for

the sake of a good assault case; yet the idea of being “ducked in the horsepond, or carted into the muck,” by a body of persons who could not afford to pay a sous for their morning’s amusement, made him beat a retreat as fast as possible.

Although Mr Peter Tims proceeded *seriatim* to each of the tenants on the Emberton estate, it may be unnecessary to detail the particulars of the various receptions he met with. Suffice it, that he found that in one respect they all agreed, which was, that their rent, by a general arrangement between them, had been paid up the day before, which, though the money was really due, was about ten days before the usual time. Although he occasionally met with a somewhat rough reception, and declared that he had never seen a more rude and uncivil set of people in his life, yet he escaped without any actual violence; and in the end, hoping to gain at least some ground, he determined to make his last visit to Sir Sidney Delaware himself.

Accustomed to do disagreeable things of all kinds, Mr Tims had as little respect for human feelings as most men; but still there was some-

thing in his peculiar situation with regard to Sir Sidney Delaware, that in some degree awed even his worldly heart. He was going to force himself into the presence of a man, whose destruction he was pursuing eagerly, on the most base and sordid motives. That, however, was nothing new ; but we must recollect that Mr Tims really supposed the son of him he was about to visit, had murdered in cold blood his last relation ; and, with that belief, there mingled both the internal conviction that his own arts had driven the unfortunate young man to commit the horrid deed which had been perpetrated at Ryebury, and the remembrance that he himself, Peter Tims, was even then straining every nerve to bring to an ignominious death, him whom his machinations had hurried into the most fearful of human crimes, and whose father he was still urging onward to ruin and despair. All these feelings and remembrances made the business very different from any he had before undertaken, and the lawyer's heart even, fluttered as the chaise drove through the gates of the dwelling now occupied by Mrs Darlington. " It is odd enough," he thought, " that my de-

laying the payment of the money should have caused my uncle's murder. Now, if I were superstitious, I should take fright and not follow this business up, for fear it should turn out ill likewise—but that is all nonsense ;” and when the chaise stopped, and a servant appeared, he boldly demanded to speak with Sir Sidney Delaware.

“ Sir Sidney Delaware is not here, sir !” replied the man abruptly.

“ Not here !” cried Mr Tims. “ Not here ! And pray, where is he then ?”

“ Can't tell, sir !” replied the man.

“ But he was here ?” rejoined the lawyer.

“ Oh yes, sir, he was here !” was the reply.

“ When did he go ?”

“ Yesterday.”

“ Where to ?”

“ I don't know.”

“ Is your mistress at home ?” demanded Mr Tims at length, finding that there was nothing to be made of the footman. The answer was in the affirmative ; and Mr Peter Tims was shown into an empty room, where the servant took the pre-

caution of demanding his name, and then went to inform his mistress. After remaining for some time in expectation, Mr Tims was rejoined by the servant ; but, instead of ushering the lawyer to Mrs Darlington's presence, he said, with a grave and solemn aspect, " Sir, my mistress bids me inform you that she is busy at present, and cannot receive you."

" Oh, if she be busy, I can wait !" answered Mr Tims, relapsing determinedly into his chair.

" You may wait all day for that matter," replied the man, losing patience ; " for I can tell you, she does not intend to see you at all. So now, you have the plain English of it !"

" Very extraordinary conduct, I must say !" observed Mr Tims, as with slow and indignant steps he walked towards his chaise.

" And pray, are you really ignorant of Sir Sidney Delaware's present abode ?" he added, after having insinuated his hand into his pocket, and drawn forth a broad silver piece, which he thought fully sufficient to tempt the discretion of any Johnny, even if he were as immaculate as Eve before the fall.

But the servant either would not tell, or could not, because he did not know : the latter of which was the most probable, as he answered sharply, as if angry at losing the money through his ignorance, “ You have had your answer once, sir,” he said, “ and I shall give you no other ;” and, with this ungracious reply, Mr Tims was obliged to content himself.

The chaise rolled him back hungry and dissatisfied to Emberton, where the tidings he had so often before received, that the pursuit of Captain Delaware had not advanced a single step, did not tend to relieve him. He found, too, that Sir Sidney and Miss Delaware had certainly not returned to their own dwelling, and his enquiry in regard to whither they had gone when they left Mrs Darlington’s, only served to make the people of the town open wide their nostrils, showing plainly that the baronet’s departure must have been secret indeed, as it had escaped the all-enquiring eyes and ears of that gossiping community.

If any thing could have soothed the mind of Mr Tims, it would have been, perhaps, the profound respect of the landlord of the King’s Arms

—he, Mr Tims, being in no degree insensible to the charms of importance and high station, and enjoying the homage of mine host, as a sort of foretaste of the increased consequence he was to possess in society, from his accession to his unfortunate uncle's ill-gotten wealth.

His dinner comforted him also greatly ; and when, after that meal was discussed, the landlord presented himself in person to ask, whether he might not recommend his admirable port, Mr Tims, after an internal struggle, acquiesced, and the wine was accordingly produced.

“ Pray, landlord,” said the lawyer, after a few words of innkeeper gossip had passed, while with a clean napkin he rubbed the outside of the decanter. “ Pray, who was that gentleman standing at the door as I got out, who stared at me so hard ? The gentleman in the black coat and gray trowsers.”

“ Oh, sir !” replied mine host of the King's Arms, “ Don't you know ?—That is Mr Cousins, the officer from London, come to enquire into this sad business !”

“ Why, Ruthven was sent for, and came too ;

for I saw and spoke to him long !" ejaculated Mr Tims in some surprise.

" True, sir ! True !" replied the landlord. " But Ruthven was sent after the captain, you know ; and Dr Wilton thought it would be better to have some one else down to keep about the place ; so Cousins was sent for, and has been here all day—that is to say, about the place ; for he was both up at Emberton and at Ryebury, I heard the waiter saying."

" At Emberton !" cried Mr Tims ; " Then, I dare say, he can tell me something of the people there. Will you have the goodness to present my compliments to him, and say, I should be happy if he will take a glass of wine with me ?"

" Certainly, sir ! Certainly !" replied the landlord ; and away he went in ambassage to Cousins, who soon after was ushered into the private room occupied by Peter Tims, Esq.

He was—or rather is—neither a very tall nor a very stout man ; but yet, in the various points of his frame, there is a good deal of solid strength to be remarked ; and in his face, which is pale and somewhat saturnine, Mr Tims thought

he could trace a great deal of resolution, mingled with that shrewd knowledge of human nature in its most debased form, which is at once necessary to, and inseparable from, the character of an officer of police. The lawyer, seeing that the officer was a very gentlemanly person in his appearance, soon made sufficient advances ; and, being seated together over their wine, Mr Tims enquired whether his companion had heard anything of the family at Emberton.

“ No !—No !” he said, in a tone which appeared habitually guarded against all enquiries, except from those authorized to squeeze the contents out of the sponge of his mind. “ No !—No !” he said. “ I have heard nothing of them at all !”

“ Come, come now, Mr Cousins !” said the lawyer, who well entered into the spirit of the wariness displayed by his companion, “ You know I am interested in this business !”

“ Yes, so I hear, sir,” replied Cousins, without a word more.

“ Well, well, then, be a little more communi-

cative, Mr Cousins," rejoined the lawyer. " Did you see any of the family at the park ?"

" No !" answered the officer ; " They were all away !"

" But did not the old woman—the housekeeper—or cook—or something—tell you where they had gone to ?" demanded the lawyer.

" There was no old housekeeper there," answered the officer. " They were all away together, and the house shut up."

Mr Tims was beaten out of his impassibility, and absolutely stared. " But surely you know where they are gone to—or, at least, you guess ?" he said, after a pause.

" Why, I may guess to be sure," replied Cousins ; " but that is nothing to nobody, you know. If one were to tell every thing they guess, sir, not one-half of their guesses would come true !"

Mr Tims paused for a minute or two, seeing that, for some reason, Cousins was resolute in not saying a word upon the affairs of Sir Sidney Delaware ; and therefore, like a good tactician,

finding the enemy's position impregnable in front, he determined to shift his ground, and make the attack from another quarter. " You have been, I hear, at my poor unhappy uncle's place at Ryebury, too?" said Mr Tims, at length. " Did you make any new discoveries? Fill your glass, Mr Cousins."

" None that I know of, sir," replied Cousins, answering the question and obeying the command at the same time. " The house was just as it was left, I fancy."

" But did you find nothing that might lead to the detection of the murderer?" said Mr Tims.

" Why, sir, I understood that you had detected the murderer yourself," answered the officer; " and that his name was Captain William Delaware."

" Yes, yes! that is all true enough," rejoined the lawyer; " but I mean, did you find no new proof against him?"

" Why, as to that, sir, I did not find any in particular," replied Cousins. " Indeed,

the only thing of which I found any positive proof at all, was, that somebody had been murdered."

"The man is a fool!" thought Mr Peter Tims—"A natural!" But yet there was a small, twinkling, subdued sort of fun lurking about the corners of Cousins's dark eyes, that caused the lawyer strongly to suspect that the officer was making a jest of him, and he consequently found himself waxing vastly indignant. His anger, however, led him into no extravagance; and, after having put a variety of other questions to his companion, who did not choose to give a straightforward answer to any of them, his wrath assumed the form of sullen silence, which he expected would soon be received as a hint to retire.

In this he was mistaken. Cousins remained with outstretched feet and emulative silence, filling his glass unbidden, with a fond reliance on the generosity of the lawyer's disposition, for all which he was heartily given to the devil, full a dozen times within the next half hour.

At the end of that period, the landlord again appeared at the door, and gave Mr Cousins a nod. The officer immediately started upon his feet, and wishing Mr Tims good-night, with many thanks for his kind condescension, he followed mine host out of the room.

CHAPTER XII.

LEAVING Mr Tims to meditate for half an hour, and then to call his clerk, in order to proceed with business of various kinds, we must follow Cousins, the officer, along the passage, down the six steps at the end, up the six steps opposite, and thence into another room, larger and more handsomely furnished, in a different part of the house. As he entered, the whole demeanour of the officer was as completely changed as it is possible to imagine; and, instead of the easy and nonchalant, perhaps somewhat listless air, which had overspread him in the presence of the attorney, he entered the chamber to which he had been summoned with

a look of brisk activity, mingled with respect, which strangely altered his whole appearance. The character of the persons before whom he now presented himself, might easily account for the change ; for the officer was too well acquainted with all ranks and stations of men, and too much accustomed to suit his conduct to his company, not to make the most marked difference in his demeanour towards a low attorney and towards two men of so much respectability as Dr Wilton and Mr Egerton. Neither of those two gentlemen, it is true, could be considered as so wealthy as Mr Tims had lately become ; but, thank God ! wealth—notwithstanding all its efforts to confound itself with respectability, has not yet been able to do so entirely, even in the eyes of the vulgar.

The two magistrates were sitting together after dinner ; but glasses and decanters had been removed, a clerk called in, and each had his bundle of notes before him. Cousins bowed respectfully, and advanced to the end of the table, but no farther ; while Dr Wilton—who, as the reader may have remarked, had

been quite bewildered and overcome during the examination of William Delaware—having now resumed all that quick and active intelligence which was the ordinary characteristic of his mind, proceeded to question the officer as to the result of his investigations during the morning.

“ Well, Cousins,” he said, “ you went to Ryebury, of course? Did you examine accurately the footmarks that I mentioned to you?”

“ Not those in the garden, sir,” replied the officer, with a countenance now full of quick intelligence; “ because you see, sir, it was very evident that such a number of people had been there since the murder, that there was no use; for we could not have distinguished one from the other; but I went up into the room where it had been done, and there the matter was clear enough.”

“ Ha!” said Mr Egerton. “ And what did you make out there? I saw nothing but a pool of blood flowing from the dead body.”

“ I beg your worship’s pardon,” answered the officer; “ but you are mistaken there. As far as I could make out, it must have been done

by two men—I don't mean to say, mind, that there were not three; but if there were, the other never stepped in the blood; but two there were certainly; for I got the tread of one very near whole—that is to say, the round of his boot heel, and more than three inches of the toe from the tip backwards—so that one of them had a remarkable long foot. There is the measure and shape of it, as far as I could get it—more than twelve inches, you see, sir.”

“ And the other !” said Dr Wilton, “ the other man's foot—what was the length of it ?”

“ Ah ! sir, that I could not get at !” replied the officer. “ There was nothing but about five inches of the fore part of the sole ; but that I got twice ; and it is as different a foot, you see, from the other as one would wish to find. Twice as broad, and square-toed ; and then I got the mark of a hand, too, which must have been at the poor old devil's throat when they were cutting it, for it was all blood. It had rested on the cornice of the dado ; and the fellow, whoever he was, wanted part of the third finger of his left hand.”

“Ha, that is a good fact!” said Dr Wilton eagerly; “but how did you make that out, Cousins?”

“Why, sir, because it marked all the way up, but left off suddenly before it got to the end,” answered the officer.

“But might not that finger have been bent?” said Mr Egerton.

“Not unless it bent in the middle of the second joint,” replied Cousins; “but the matter was quite clear, sir; and one has nothing to do but look at it to satisfy themselves that a part of the finger was wanting; and what is oddest of all, that it has not been taken off at the joint. All I saw besides was, that the fellow who cut the old man’s throat, must have gone away with his pantaloons very bloody; for he did it kneeling, and there is just a clear spot where his knee and part of his leg kept the blood from going over the floor.”

“Indeed! That may serve some purpose, too!” said Dr Wilton; “but did you find no more steps or marks of any other person?”

“Oh, plenty of steps, sir!” replied the officer.

“ There were all the dirty feet of the coroner’s inquest. But I think—though I’m not quite so sure of that—that there must have been somebody left below to keep watch, while the others went up to do the job. You see, sir, there is in one place of the passage floor a fresh deal, and I can trace upon that deal the marks of a shoe with large nails in it, going backwards and forwards, the matter of twenty times. Now, I hear that the deal was put in not a week ago, and all the folks here agree, that the old man never let a person with nails in his shoes twenty times into his house in all his life ; so it looks like as if that were the only time and way in which it could get so often marked.”

The two magistrates looked at each other, and Mr Egerton answered, “ Your suspicion is a shrewd one, Cousins ; but now, tell us sincerely, from all that you have seen and heard, do you think that Captain Delaware has been one of those concerned ?”

“ Why really, sir, I *cannot* say !” answered the officer ; “ but to tell the truth—though there is no knowing after all—nevertheless—not to

“speak for a certainty, you know—but still, I should think not.”

“You are now speaking to us in confidence, you know, Cousins,” said Dr Wilton; “and, indeed, we are altogether acting extra-officially in regard to the murder, though we think it may connect itself with the other affair. Tell us, therefore, why you judge it was not Captain Delaware.”

“Why, sir, that is difficult to say,” replied the officer. “But first and foremost, do you see, it strikes me that the job was done by as knowing a hand as ever was on the lay—one that has had a regular apprenticeship like. Well, as far as I can hear, that does not match the Captain. Then, next, whoever did it, has got in upon the sly, by means of the girl, whether she be an accessory or not. At all events, she has gone off with her ’complices.—She’s never murdered—never a bit of her, take my word for that! Then you see, sir, when I had done with Ryebury, I went away to Emberton Park House; and though there was a mighty fuss to get in, all the family being gone, yet I managed it at last, and got a

whole heap of the Captain's old boots and shoes, and measured them with the footmarks, and on oath I could prove that none of them—neither those up, nor those down stairs—the marks I mean—ever came off his foot.”

“Why, it would seem to me, that what you have said, would go very far to exculpate him altogether,” said Dr Wilton.

“Ay, sir! But that is a mighty rum story about the notes,” answered the officer. “It would make a queer case for the ’sises, any how. Nevertheless, I don’t think him guilty; and if he would explain about the money, all would be clear enough—but that story of his won’t go; and if he sticks to it and is caught, he’ll be hang’d if Judge —— tries him. He’ll get off if it come before Sir ——. He did well enough to slip his head out of the collar any way.”

“But do you not think that Ruthven will catch him then?” demanded Dr Wilton, with no small anxiety.

“Why, not near so easy as if he were an old thief,” replied the officer; “for you see, sir, we

know all their haunts, and where they'll take to in a minute, while this young chap may go Lord knows where !”

Both the magistrates paused thoughtfully for a minute or two, and at length Dr Wilton went on ; “ You see Cousins the fact is this, that the coroner having issued his warrant against Captain Delaware, our straightforward duty as magistrates is to use all means to put that warrant in execution ; and we are neither called upon, nor have we perhaps a strict legal right, after a verdict has been pronounced, to seek for evidence in favour of the person against whom that verdict has been given. At the same time, we are blamed for not committing the prisoner at once ; and the coroner is blamed for not sending him off to the county jail the moment the verdict was given, though it was then night. It is also a part of our clearest duty to do all in our power to bring the guilty to punishment, and to prepare the case, in a certain degree, for the officers of the crown ; consequently, without any great stretch of interpretation, we may consider ourselves justified in using every means, to satisfy ourselves

who are innocent and who are guilty. You think that Captain Delaware is not the culprit ; and you think that three persons have, at all events, been concerned in the murder. Some suspicion of this kind must also have been in the minds of the coroner's jury, when they returned a verdict against Captain William Delaware, and some person or persons unknown. It is our next business, therefore, to search for those persons unknown, by every means in our power."

"Why, as to the Captain, sir," answered Cousins, "the business would be soon settled, if we could find out how he came by the money."

"It is the most extraordinary thing in the world," said Dr Wilton, "that Mr Beauchamp cannot be found anywhere—I am really beginning to be apprehensive concerning him. He left me in a very low and depressed state ; and if his servant, Harding, were not with him—which, as he is not to be heard of either, it would seem he is—I should be afraid that his mind had given way."

"Harding ! Harding !" said Cousins, thoughtfully, "I wonder if that could be the Harding

who was a sort of valet and secretary to —— the banker, and who pocketed a good deal of his cash when he failed. He had well nigh been hanged, or at least taken a swim across the pond—but the lawyer let him off for some disclosures he made, and got him a new place too, they say! I have lost sight of that chap for a long time. But however, sir, you were speaking about the persons unknown. Now I think, do you see, that I have got the end of a clue that may lead to one of them; and if we get one we cannot fail to get all.”

“Who then do you think it is?” demanded Mr Egerton. “Let no means be spared to find out even one of the ruffians.”

“Why sir, you see, I don’t mind telling you, because it will go no farther; but I think it had better be alone,” and he looked significantly at the clerk, who was instantly ordered to withdraw.

“Beg pardon, gentlemen,” said Cousins more freely, when the other had left the room; “but I’ve known some of those country clerks that were the arrantest gossips in the whole neighbourhood. However the matter is, I hit upon

what I think is the head of the right nail, when I was after the other business, do you see. You told me to enquire about the burning of the lady's house, and the silver plate that had disappeared; so, amongst other things, I went to the coach-office, and examined the books, and just about that time I found that there had been two parcels sent up to Amos Jacobs, Esq., to be left till called for. Now, thinks I, who can Amos Jacobs be, but the old Jew of the Scuttle-hole, as they call him. He receives stolen goods, gentlemen, and is as great a blind as ever swung. Well, I asked the book-keeper if he had noticed those two parcels; and he said yes, because they were so small, and yet so heavy. So then I asked who brought them; and he said a gentleman what had been lodging three doors down the street, for six weeks or so. So away I went; and, looking up at the house, I saw, 'Lodgings to Let' stuck up, and in I walked."

"Mr Beauchamp's lodgings, I dare say," said Dr Wilton smiling.

"No, no, sir!" replied Cousins, "I knew those before. They lie a good bit farther down.

But an old woman came to show me the lodgings, thinking I was going to take them. So I asked her who had been in them before, and she up and told me all about it. A very nice gentleman she said he was, who was a great chemist she believed; for he was always puddling about over a fire, making experiments as he told her—but bless you, gentlemen! he was just making white soup of the lady's plate—that was what he was doing. So then I asked her his name, and she told me it was Mr Anthony Smithson. So then the whole matter came upon me at once. Your worships must understand that, as far as I know of or remember, there is only one man upon the lay in London who has lost a bit of his finger; and not having seen him for some time, I had forgot all about him. His name is Tony Thomson—but sometimes people called him Billy Winter—and at times he took the name of Johnson—and Perkins too, I have heard him called—but the name he went by generally, a good while ago, was Tony Smithson."

"But if the lodgings were to be let, he must

of course be gone?" cried Dr Wilton; "and we are as far off from the facts as ever."

"Oh! he is gone, sure enough!" answered the officer, "That was the first thing I asked the old woman, and she told me that he went the very day before the terrible murder, and that he would be so sorry to hear it, for he used often to walk up that way, and asked her many questions about Mr Tims, poor old man. Well, when I heard this, and had got a good deal more out of her, I thought I might as well look through the place; for these sort of folks generally are in too great a hurry not to leave something behind them; and I opened all the drawers and places—and the old woman thought it very strange, till I told her who I was. He had cleared all away, however, except this gold thimble, which had fallen halfway down between the drawers and the wall. It has got 'J. D.' upon it, which, I take it, means—'Something Darlington.' So it must have been prigged at the time of the fire."

Dr Wilton and Mr Egerton both looked at the thimble, and felt convinced that it had be-

longed to Mrs Darlington. At all events, the information which Cousins had obtained, was of course most important, as it rendered it more than probable, that one at least of the persons who had robbed, if not fired the house upon the hill, had been also a principal in the murder of the miser. Both the magistrates, therefore, joined in giving high commendations to the officer, and particular directions were added for prosecuting the investigation. Cousins, however, had already anticipated several of the orders he now received.

“ I tried all I could, sir,” he replied, “ to find out some of the fellow’s stray boots or shoes, but he had left none behind. I then went to all the different shoemakers and cobblers, to see if any of them could give me his measure ; but he had been too cunning for that. The stage-coachman, however, remembered taking him up here for London, and setting him down, by his own desire, at a little public-house four miles off ; so that we have got upon the right scent beyond doubt ; and if you will give me permission, gentlemen, I will go out this evening, and find out whom he most

kept company with in this place, before the matter gets blown. I have had a good pumping to-night already ; but it would not do."

" And pray, who took the trouble of pumping you, Cousins?" demanded Mr Egerton. " Though this is the most gossiping town in Europe, I should have thought there was roguery enough in it also, to keep the inhabitants from meddling unnecessarily with a police-officer."

" Oh, it was none of the people of the place, sir !" replied Cousins. " They only stared at me. This was the Mr Tims who gave the Captain in charge, I hear. He seems a sharp hand, and he has a great good-will to prove the captain guilty, though I don't see just yet, what good it would do him, either."

Dr Wilton asked several questions concerning the lawyer, and the examination to which he had subjected the officer ; and then—after shaking his head, and observing that he believed Mr Peter Tims to be a great rogue—he dismissed Cousins to pursue his enquiries in the town.

It must be here remarked, that Mr Egerton, although he knew William Delaware personally,

and did not think him at all a person to commit the crime with which he was charged, had never felt that assured confidence in his innocence which Dr Wilton had always experienced. It was not, indeed, that Mr Egerton thought worse of Captain Delaware individually than the clergyman did, but he thought worse of the whole human race. Gradually, however, he had been coming over to Dr Wilton's opinion; and his conversation that night with the officer, had completely made a convert of him, by showing him that, notwithstanding the one extraordinary circumstance which yet remained to be explained, every new fact that was elicited, tended more and more to prove that the murder had been committed by persons of a very different class and habits from the supposed delinquent. Feeling, therefore, that in some degree he had done the unfortunate young gentleman injustice, he now determined to redouble his exertions to apprehend the real culprits, in the hope and expectation of clearing the character of Captain Delaware. With this view, he resolved to remain at Emberton that night, contrary to his former plans; and he pro-

posed to Dr Wilton to visit the old miser's house at Ryebury the next morning, in order to verify the footmarks, as measured by Cousins, lest the new proprietor might think fit, after the funeral, which was to take place at four that day, to have all traces of the horrid scene effaced, which he might do for more reasons than one, if the malevolence Captain Delaware charged him with were really his motive.

“ Why, the truth is,” replied Dr Wilton, in answer to this proposal, “ that I intended to go very early to-morrow to Mrs Darlington's, to see poor Blanche Delaware, and try to discover whether she can give any clue by which Henry Beauchamp can be found.”

“ Is it likely that she should possess any ?” said Mr Egerton, laughing.

“ Why, they are cousins, you know,” answered Dr Wilton, with a smile which served to contradict the reason that his words seemed to assign for the knowledge of her cousin's movements, which he attributed to Miss Delaware. “ They are cousins, you know ; and I have heard it reported that there was something more—but,

at all events, I am anxious about the lad, and do not choose to leave any chance of discovering him untried."

"But, by the way, I forgot," said Mr Egerton, "I heard an hour or two ago that Sir Sidney and Miss Delaware had left Mrs Darlington's, and had gone to some watering-place, I think the people said."

"Oh no, impossible!" said Dr Wilton. "Impossible! They would have let me hear, as a matter of course." Nevertheless, he rose and rang the bell, although, so convinced was he of the truth of what he asserted, that, ere the waiter appeared, he had proceeded to arrange with Mr Egerton, that while that gentleman went to Ryebury, and verified the traces which Cousins had observed, he would drive to Mrs Darlington's, and make the enquiries he proposed.

"Pray, have you heard any thing of Sir Sidney Delaware having left Mrs Darlington's new house?" demanded Dr Wilton, when the waiter appeared.

"Oh dear yes, sir!" replied the man. Mr Tims—Lawyer Tims, sir—who was there this

morning, could find none of them, and has been enquiring all over the place to make out where they are gone to. But nobody can tell, sir, and every one says they have run away."

"Nonsense ! said Mr Egerton, "That will do !" and the waiter retired.

"This is very extraordinary !" said Dr Wilton. "Every one seems to be disappearing, one after the other. Nevertheless, I will go up and enquire of Mrs Darlington, and will come and join you at Ryebury afterwards."

The meeting was accordingly arranged, and shortly after Cousins returned, bringing a vast store of fresh information. Mr Anthony Smithson, alias Thomson, alias Perkins, alias Johnson, alias Winter, fully described and particularized, so as to leave no doubt whatever, of his identity with crushfingered Billy Winter, a notorious London flashman, had been remarked, by all the wonder-mongers of Emberton, for his intimacy with Mr Harding, Mr Burrel's servant. He had been also observed to have a peculiar predilection for the lanes and fields about the house at Ryebury. This information had led the officers to fresh

enquiries, concerning the philosophical Harding himself, who had been accurately described by the investigating and observing people of Emberton; and, on his return, Cousins expressed his fullest conviction, that he was the identical Harding, who had, as he before described, got off in a serious criminal case, solely by the connivance of an attorney. Who that attorney was, need hardly be explained; and indeed, to do so, would only lead us into the details of a previous affair, totally unconnected with this history. Suffice it, that no sooner did Cousins hear that Harding had been with his master, at the house of Mrs Darlington, on the day of the fire, than he at once declared himself to be perfectly certain that his hands, and no others, had kindled the flame. He added also, that he did not doubt that Smithson and Harding—whether they had exactly fixed upon any precise object or not—had come down to Emberton, with the intention of acting in concert; and he added, that it would not at all surprise him, to find that they were the two who committed the murder itself, especially as the

people had particularly described to him the valet's long foot.

While he was speaking, Dr Wilton rapidly turned over his notes of the examination of Captain Delaware, and the servants at Emberton Park, and at length lighted upon the declaration of the man-servant, who stated, that in returning from some errand in that direction, he had seen the valet Harding at the back of the park, the lanes surrounding which led directly towards Ryebury.

“If I could think of any reason for his putting the money in the captain's room,” said Cousins, as the clergyman read this passage, “I should think that Harding had done it himself, on purpose to hang him.”

“May he not have been instigated to do it by others?” said Mr Egerton.

“If one could find out any reason for it,” replied the officer.

“Why, Captain Delaware suspected something of the kind himself,” replied the magistrate, and he read a part of the young fugitive's letter,

watching from time to time, as he did so, the effect it produced upon the countenance of a man who, like Cousins, was accustomed to trace and encounter crime in every form. The officer closed one eye, put his tongue slightly into his cheek, and ended by a half whistle.

“ You had better look to it gentlemen,” he said ; “ you had better look to it—such things have been done before now—so you had better look to it !”

“ We will !” answered Dr Wilton, “ We will ! let us see you to-morrow about nine, Cousins.”

The officer took the hint, and withdrew.

CHAPTER XIII.

OH, that I had the lucid arrangement of the late Lord Tenterden, or the happy illustration of Francis Jeffrey, or the *curiosa felicitas* of George Gordon Byron, or the nervous verve of Gifford, or the elegant condensation of Lockhart, or any of the peculiar powers of any of the great men of past or future ages, to help me to make this chapter both interesting and brief; for there are several facts to state, and small space to state them in; and—what is worse than all—they are so dry and pulverized, that they are enough to give any one who meddles with them, what the Spaniard gracefully terms a “*retortijon de tripas*.”

As, however, they are absolutely necessary to the clear understanding of what is to follow, I will at once place them all in order together, leaving the reader to swallow them in any vehicle he may think fit.

First, then, on his visit to Mrs Darlington, Dr Wilton obtained no information whatever, except that the tidings he had before heard were true. Sir Sidney Delaware and his daughter, Mrs Darlington said, had indeed left her; but they had requested, as a particular favour, that she would not even enquire whither they were going; and, as the favour was a very small one, she had granted it of course. From the house of that worthy lady, Dr Wilton proceeded to join Mr Egerton at Ryebury, where—according to their own request—they were met by the coroner for the county. All the traces which had been observed by Cousins were verified, and a complete plan of the scene of the murder was made under the direction of the magistrates.

A long conference took place at the same time between the two justices and the coroner, who ex-

pressed less dissatisfaction at the escape of Captain Delaware than they had expected.

“ We must share the blame between us, gentlemen,” he said. “ You, for not having remanded him to some secure place, I, for not having sent him five-and-twenty miles that night to the county jail. Certain it is, the case was a very doubtful one, and I would fain have had the jury adjourn till the following morning. But in truth,” he added, “ coroners’ juries, knowing that their decision is not final, and disgusted and agitated by the horrible scenes they are obliged to examine, very often return a hasty and ill-considered verdict, in spite of all the officers of the crown can do. This was, I am afraid, the case in the present instance ; and I have no doubt that the young man may have made his escape more from apprehension of a long and painful imprisonment—which is a severe punishment in itself—than from any consciousness of guilt.”

Finding his opinion thus far favourable, the two magistrates communicated to the crown-officer all that they had discovered in regard to Harding and Smithson, and also the faint suspicion which

they entertained, that Harding, at the instigation of Mr Tims junior, had placed the money in the chamber of Captain Delaware.

The coroner, however, shook his head. "As to Harding and Smithson," he said, "the matter is sufficiently made out to justify us in issuing warrants for their apprehension; and Harding may perhaps—from some motive we know nothing of—have placed the money as you suspect, especially as he seems to have been well acquainted with Emberton Park; but I do not believe that Mr Tims had any thing to do with it. To suppose so, would at once lead us to the conclusion that he was an accomplice in the murder of his uncle; and his whole conduct gave the lie to that. No—no—had he even known that his uncle was dead before he came here, his whole actual behaviour afterwards would have been very different. He did not affect any great sorrow for his uncle, as he would have done had he been at all culpable; but, at the same time, he was evidently vindictive in the highest degree against the murderers. No—no—you are mistaken there, gentlemen! But let us

issue warrants against the other two, and intrust their execution to Cousins. We shall easily be able to get at the truth in regard to Captain Delaware from one of those gentry, if we can but catch them."

While the warrants were in preparation, it was announced to the magistrates that Mr Peter Tims himself was below, with the undertakers ; and also, that the constable of a neighbouring parish had brought up a boy who had found a hat upon the sea-shore, which, it was supposed, might throw some light upon the matter before the magistrates.

Mr Tims was accordingly directed to wait, while the boy was brought up, and the hat examined. The peculiarity of its form—a form unknown in Emberton—and of its colour—a shade of that light russet-brown, in which Shakespeare clothes the dawn for her morning's walk—at once led Dr Wilton to believe that it had belonged to his unfortunate friend Henry Beauchamp. As Beauchamp, however, was not one of those men who write their names in their hats, the matter still remained in the most un-

pleasant state in the world—a state of doubt; and such a state being not less disagreeable to Dr Wilton than to any one else—after catechising the boy, and discovering that nothing was to be discovered, except that the hat had been washed on shore at about five miles' distance from Ryebury, of which washing it bore ample marks—the worthy clergyman left his companions in magistracy to expedite the warrants, and returned in person to Emberton, in order to examine Mrs Wilson, Beauchamp's late landlady, in regard to the hat, which he carried thither along with him.

As soon as Mrs Wilson saw it, she declared that it was the identical hat that poor dear Mr Burrel used always to wear in the morning. She had seen it, she said, full a hundred times, and knew it, because the leather in the inside was laced with a silk tag, for all the world like the boddices she could remember when she was young. Eagerly, also, did she question Dr Wilton as to where it had been found; for it seems that Mr Burrel had been no small favourite

with the old lady ; and when she was made acquainted with the facts, she wrung her hands, declaring that she was sure the poor young gentleman had gone and drowned himself for love of Miss Delaware. Now, Dr Wilton had at his heart entertained a sort of vague suspicion that Beauchamp, notwithstanding all his strong moral and religious principles, might—in a moment of despair, and in that fancied disgust at the world, which he was somewhat too apt to pamper—do some foolish act. Perhaps I should have said that he *feared* it might be so ; and, as he would rather have believed any other thing, and was very angry at himself for supposing it possible, he was of course still more angry at good Mrs Wilson for so strongly confirming his apprehensions. He scolded her very heartily, therefore, for imagining what he had before imagined himself ; and was just leaving her house, when he bethought him of making enquiries concerning the haunts and behaviour of Mr Burrel's valet, Harding. To his questions on this head, Mrs Wilson—though a little indignant at the reprimand she had received—replied

in the most clear and distinct manner, that Harding had never kept company with any one but Mr Smithson, the chemist gentleman, who lodged farther up the town ; that no one scarcely ever heard the sound of his voice ; and that, for her part, so queer were his ways, that she should have thought that he was a conjurer, if he had not been a gentleman's servant—which two occupations she mistakenly imagined to be incompatible.

Dr Wilton next enquired what was the size of the valet's foot, at which Mrs Wilson looked aghast, demanding, " Lord ! how should she know what was the size of the gentleman's foot ? But stay !" she cried the moment after, " Stay, stay, sir ! Now I think of it, I can tell to a cheeseparing ; for in the hurry that he went away in, he left a pair of boots behind him ; and the groom, when he set off the morning after, would not take them, because he said Mr Harding was always *jawing* him and meddling with his business, and some day or another he would tell him a thing or two."

Dr Wilton demanded an immediate sight of

the boots, with all the eagerness of a connoisseur, and with much satisfaction beheld a leathern foot-bag of extraordinary length brought in by the landlady, who declared, as she entered, that "he had a very long foot after all."

The boot was immediately carried off to the inn ; but as Mr Egerton had the measurements with him at Ryebury, Dr Wilton was obliged to wait one mortal hour and a half ere he could proceed to ascertain the correspondence of the valet's boot with the bloody mark of the murderer's foot, tormenting himself about Beauchamp in the meanwhile. After waiting that time, however, in fretful incertitude, as to going to the place itself, or staying his fellow magistrate's return, Mr Egerton appeared, the paper on which the footmarks had been traced was produced, and the boot being set down thereon, filled up one of the vacant spaces without the difference of a line.

"Now, now, we have him !" cried Dr Wilton, rubbing his hands eagerly. "Now we have him. Beyond all question, the council for the crown will permit the least criminal to be-

come king's evidence, and I doubt not, in the slightest degree, that we shall find poor William Delaware completely exculpated,"

"You call to my mind, my dear friend," said Mr Egerton, laying his hand on Dr Wilton's arm, as if to stop his transports? You call to my mind a waggish receipt for dressing a strange dish."

"How so? How so?" demanded Dr Wilton, with a subdued smile at the reproof of his eagerness, which he knew was coming in some shape or other. "What is your receipt, my dear sir?"

"It runs thus"—answered Mr Egerton, "*How to dress a griffin*—First catch a griffin!—and then, dress him any way you like!"

"Well, well!" answered Dr Wilton. "We will try to catch the griffin, my dear sir, and you shall not find me wanting in ardour to effect the preliminary step, if you will aid me to bring about the second, and let me dress my griffin when I have caught him. To say truth," he added, relapsing into grave seriousness, "the subject is not a laughing one; and I am afraid I have suffered my personal feelings to

become somewhat too keenly interested—perhaps to a degree of levity. God knows, there is little reason for us to be eager in the matter, except from a desire that, by the punishment of the guilty, the innocent should be saved, and I am willing to confess, that I entertain not the slightest doubt of the innocence of William Delaware. A crime has certainly been committed by some one ; and according to all the laws of God and man, it is one which should be punished most severely. Heaven forbid, however, that I should treat such a matter with levity. All I meant to say is, that if we do succeed in apprehending the real murderers, we must endeavour to make their conviction the means of clearly exculpating the innocent.”

“ I hope we shall be as successful as you could wish,” replied Mr Egerton ; “ and I think it would give me scarcely less pleasure than it would give yourself, to hear that Captain Delaware is innocent, although I will not suffer either a previous good character, or a gallant deportment, or a handsome countenance, to weigh with me, except as presumptive testimony in his favour,

and as a caution to myself, to be on my guard against the natural predilections of man's heart. But what have you discovered regarding the hat?"

"Confirmation, I am afraid too strong, of my worst fears," answered Dr Wilton; and he related how positively Mrs Wilson had declared it to have belonged to Mr Beauchamp. Measures for investigating this event also, were immediately taken, and information of the supposed death by drowning, of a gentleman lately residing at Emberton, was given to all the stations on that coast. This new catastrophe, of course, furnished fresh food to the gossiping propensities of the people of the town; and the tale, improved by the rich and prolific imagination of its inhabitants, was sent forth connected by a thousand fine and filmy links, with the murder of the miser, and the disappearance of the Delaware family. It instantly appeared in all the public prints, who, to do them but justice, were far too charitable to leave it in its original nakedness. Hence it was transferred, with new scenery, dresses, and decorations, to a broad sheet of very thin paper, and distributed by a man

with a loud voice, on the consideration of one halfpenny, to wondering housemaids and keepers of chandlers' shops, under the taking title of the " Rybury Trajedy !" and there is strong reason to believe, that it was alone owing to the temporary difficulties of Mr——, of the —— Theatre, that Captain William Delaware was not brought upon the boards, with a knife in his hand cutting the throat of the miser, while Henry Beauchamp threw himself from the rocks into the sea, for love of the murderer's sister. That this theatrical consummation did not take place, is much to be wondered at ; and it is to be hoped, that when the managers are furnished with all the correct particulars, they will still give the public their version of the matter on every stage, from Drury Lane to the very barn at Emberton itself.

As may be easily supposed, for two country magistrates, Dr Wilton and Mr Egerton had now their hands tolerably full ; and consequently, on separating, they agreed to meet again at Emberton in two days. In the mean time, the funeral of the murdered man took place, con-

ducted, as Mr Peter Tims assured every body, with that attention to economy, which would have been gratifying to the deceased himself, if he could have witnessed it. Nobody could doubt that the nephew had probability on his side in this respect, though the undertaker grumbled, and the mercer called him a shabby person. After the interment, Mr Tims took possession of the premises and the papers of the deceased; but, for reasons that may be easily divined, he did not choose to stay in the dwelling that his uncle had inhabited. Passing the ensuing evening and night at the inn, he had all the papers removed thither, and continued in the examination thereof for many an hour, in a room from which even his own clerk was excluded. Those who saw him afterwards declared, that his countenance was as resplendent as a new sovereign; but he selfishly kept all his joy to his own bosom, and after spending another day in Emberton, he set off post for London, with many a bag and tin-case, to take out letters of administration.

CHAPTER XIV.

LORD ASHBOROUGH left his niece, Maria Beauchamp, and the chief part of his establishment, in the country; and setting out with but two servants, arrived in the metropolis late on Saturday night. With that attention to decorum and propriety which formed a chief point in his minor policy, he appeared, on the Sunday morning, in the gallery of St George's Church, Hanover Square, exactly as the organ sounded, and with grave and devout face passed through the next two hours. But let it not be supposed that the impressive service of the church of England, read even in its most impressive manner, occupied his thoughts, or that even the eloquence of a

Hodgson caught his ear and affected his heart. It was only the flesh-and-blood tenement of Lord Ashborough that was at church, Lord Ashborough himself, in heart and in spirit, was in his library in Grosvenor Square, eagerly conversing with Mr Peter Tims, on the best means of snatching the last spoils of his enemy, Sir Sidney Delaware. Not that Lord Ashborough did not go to church with the full and clear purpose of doing his duty; but people's ideas of doing their duty are so very various, that he thought the going to church quite enough—without attending.

Now, in spite of risking a *longueur*, we must observe, that there are some people, who, although they live in great opposition to the doctrines they hear, nevertheless, deserve a certain degree of honour for going to church, because they persevere in doing so, though the two hours they spend there are the most tiresome of their whole lives. Attribute it to resolution, or sense of decency, or what you will, still some honour is their due; but we are sorry to say, that no such plea could be set up in favour of Lord

Ashborough. The two hours that he spent at church were not tedious ; he had the comfortable persuasion that he was doing his duty, and setting a good example ; and, at the same time, had a fair opportunity of thinking over all his plans and projects for the ensuing week, without any chance of interruption. Thus, the time he spent within the holy walls, was a time of calm and pleasant reflection, and what profit he derived from it, the rest of his life must show. At all events, there was nothing disagreeable in it. It was a part of the pomp and parade of existence, and he went through it all, with a degree of equanimity that took away every kind of merit from the act.

Before he had concluded his breakfast on the Monday morning, a servant announced that Mr Peter Tims had been shown into the library ; and thither Lord Ashborough bent his steps, after he had kept the lawyer waiting long enough to preserve his dignity and show his indifference.

Mr Peter Tims was seated in the far corner of the library with great humility, and rose instantly on the peer's entrance, bowing to the

ground. Now, the fact was—and it may need some explanation—that Mr Tims found he was growing a great man, in his own estimation, on the wealth he derived from his uncle. He had just discovered that pride was beginning to get above avarice in his heart, and he became afraid, that Lord Ashborough might think he was deviating into too great familiarity, from feeling a strong inclination in his own bosom to do so. Such a consummation was, of course, not desirable on many accounts; and with his usual politic shrewdness, Peter Tims resolved to assume a far greater degree of humility than he really felt, and—while by other means, he raised himself slowly in the estimation, both of his noble patron and the world in general, suffering his newly-acquired wealth silently to act with its own weight—and determined to affect still a tone of ample subserviency till his objects were fully gained.

In the meanwhile, Lord Ashborough, who believed that a gulf as wide as that which yawned in the Forum, lay between himself and Peter Tims, bespoke the lawyer with condescending

civility, bade him take a seat, and enquired what news he had brought from Emberton.

Mr Peter Tims hesitated, and then replied, that the news he brought was bad, he was afraid, in every respect. “ In the first place, my lord, I have not been able to stop any of the rents, for they had unfortunately been paid on the day preceding my return to Emberton. In the next place, it would appear that Sir Sidney Delaware has run away as well as his son ; for he has certainly disappeared, and, notwithstanding every means I could use, I was not able to discover any trace of him.”

He had imagined that Lord Ashborough would have expressed nothing but disappointment at tidings which threatened to make his views upon the Emberton estate more vague and difficult of success ; but he was mistaken. The first passion in the peer’s breast was revenge. The picture presented to him was Sidney Delaware flying from his country, disgraced, ruined, and blighted in mind and body. Memory strode over three-and-twenty years in an instant, and showed him the same man as he had then appeared—his suc-

cessful rival triumphing in his disappointment. Placing the portrait of the present and the past together, the peer again tasted the joy of revenge, and mentally ate his enemy's heart in the marketplace. For a moment, avarice gave place to revenge ; but, after all, avarice is the most durable and permanent of human passions. Like Sinbad's Old Man of the Sea, it gets upon the back of every thing else that invades its own domain, and never leaves them till they die of inanition. Ambition sometimes gorges itself ; pride is occasionally brought down ; vanity tires, and love grows cold ; but avarice, once possessed of the human heart, may be driven into the inmost recesses for a moment, but never quits the citadel, and always sooner or later regains the outworks.

“ Will this make any difference with regard to our proceedings against the old man and his son ?” demanded the peer, after he had given revenge its moment, and had suffered avarice to return.

“ Not at all, as respects the son !” answered Mr Tims ; “ but I am afraid that, in the father's case, it may occasion some delays. You see,

my lord, not knowing where he is, we cannot serve him with process. In regard to the son, too, you see, my lord, nothing can be discovered—not the slightest trace. However, I doubt not that we shall be able to fit him with a law, that will secure your lordship the reversion. But I am afraid, my lord, I have still worse news in store for you. Grieved I am to be such a croaking raven in your lordship's ears, and thus to"—

"Do me the favour, then, my good sir," said Lord Ashborough, cutting across his figures of speech impatiently, "to make your croaking as brief as possible ; and, without circumlocution, to tell me what is the matter."

"I would first ask your lordship," said Mr Tims, who had a great opinion of the foolish plan of breaking bad tidings by degrees. "I would first ask your lordship, if you have lately heard from Mr Beauchamp?"

"Oh, is that all?" said Lord Ashborough. "I told you before, and I tell you again, Mr Tims, there is no more chance of her marrying Henry Beauchamp, than there is of my marrying my walking-stick."

“ But it is not that, my lord !” cried Mr Tims.
“ It is not that at all ! I am afraid Mr Beauchamp is drowned !”

Lord Ashborough started from his chair, pale and aghast, with a complication of painful feelings, which Mr Tims had little thought could be excited by the death of any living thing. But the lawyer made the common mistake of generalizing too broadly. He had fancied that his patron was calmly callous to every thing but what immediately affected himself, and he was mistaken ; for it is improbable that there ever was a man whose heart, if we could have traced all its secret chambers and intricate windings, did not somewhere contain a store, however small, of gentle feelings and affections. Lord Ashborough loved his nephew, though probably Henry Beauchamp was the only human being he did sincerely love. In him all the better affections of his heart had centred.

Lord Ashborough had also loved his brother, Beauchamp's father ; and in early life, when the heart is soft, he had done him many a kindness, which—as they were perhaps the only truly ge-

nerous actions of his life—made him love his brother still more, as the object that had excited them. Neither, in the whole course of their lives, did there occur one unfortunate point of rivalry between them ; and Mr Beauchamp, or rather Governor Beauchamp, as he was at last generally called, felt so deeply the various acts of friendship which his brother had shown to him, and him alone, in all the world, that he took the best way of expressing his gratitude, namely, by making Lord Ashborough on all occasions appear to advantage, giving way to his pride, putting the most favourable construction on his actions, and never opposing him in words, however differently he might shape his own conduct. Thus the love of his brother remained unshaken and increasing, till the last day of Governor Beauchamp's life ; and at his death it was transferred to his son, rendered indeed more tender, but not decreased by regret for the father, and by the softening power of memory.

It is sad to think that any less noble feelings should have mingled with these purer affections, even though they might tend to increase the

intensity of his affection for Henry Beauchamp. It would be far more grateful to the mind, to let this redeeming point stand out resplendent in the character of the peer ; but we are telling truth, and it must not be. The shadow, however, perhaps is a slight one ; but it was pride of two kinds that gave the full height to Lord Ashborough's love for Beauchamp. In the first place, to his title and estates there was no other heir than Henry Beauchamp. There was not even any collateral line of male descent, which could have perpetuated the earldom, if his nephew had been removed. Henry Beauchamp dead, and the peer saw himself the last Lord Ashborough. In him, therefore, had centred all the many vague, and, we might almost call them, *mysterious*, feelings of interest, with which we regard the being destined to carry on our race and name into the long futurity. Family pride, then, tended to increase the earl's affection for his nephew ; but there was pride also of another kind concerned. Lord Ashborough admired Henry Beauchamp as well as loved him ; and, strange to say, ad-

mired him, not only for the qualities which they possessed in common, but for the qualities which his nephew possessed, and which he himself did not. They were both good horsemen, and Lord Ashborough had been in his youth, like Henry Beauchamp, skilled in all manly exercises, had been elegant in his manners, and graceful in his person ; but light wit, a fertile imagination, a generous disposition, were qualities that the earl had never possessed ; and yet he was gratified beyond measure that his nephew did possess them, delighted in the admiration they called upon him, and was proud of the heir to his fortune and his name.

All these facts had been overlooked by Mr Tims, whose mind, though of the same kind of web as that of his patron, was of a grosser texture ; and not a little was he surprised and frightened, when he beheld the effect which his abrupt tidings produced upon the earl.

Lord Ashborough turned deadly pale, and, staggering up, rang the bell violently. Mr Tims would have spoken, but the earl waved his hand

for him to be silent ; and when the servant appeared, exclaimed, “ The drops out of my dressing-room ! Quick ! ”

The man disappeared, but returned in a moment with vial and glass ; and pouring out a few drops, Lord Ashborough swallowed them hastily ; and then leaning his head upon his hand, paused for a minute or two, while the servant stood silent beside him, and the lawyer gazed upon him in horror and astonishment. In a short time the peer's colour returned ; and, giving a nod to the servant, who was evidently not unaccustomed to scenes somewhat similar, he said, “ You may go ! ”

“ Now, Mr Tims,” he continued, when the door was once more closed, “ what were you telling me ? But first, let me say you should be more cautious in making such communications. Do you not know that I am subject to spasms of the heart, which are always brought on by any sudden affection of the mind ? ”

“ Mr Tims apologized and declared his ignorance, and vowed he would not have done such a thing for the world, *et cætera* ; but Lord Ash-

borough soon stopped him, and demanded, with some impatience, what had given rise to the apprehension he had expressed. The lawyer, then, with circumlocution, if not with delicacy, proceeded to state the rumours that he had heard at Emberton, which had been confirmed to him by Mrs Wilson, namely, that Mr Beauchamp's hat had been washed on shore on the sea-side not far from that place. He had found it his duty, he said, to make enquiries, especially as the good landlady had declared that the young gentleman had appeared very melancholy and "out of sorts" on the day he left her. No other part of Mr Beauchamp's apparel had been found except a glove, which was picked up on the road leading from Emberton to a little fishing village not far off.

"There is one sad fact, my lord, however," continued the lawyer "which gives me great apprehension. "I, myself, in the course of my enquiries, discovered Mr Beauchamp's beautiful hunter, Martindale, in the hands of a poor pot-house keeper, in a village about three miles, or not so much, from Emberton. This man and his

servants were the last people who saw your nephew. He came there, it appears, late one evening on horseback, asked if they had a good dry stable, put up his horse, saw it properly attended to, and then walked out, looking very grave and disconsolate, the man said. I found that this person knew the horse's name; and, when I asked him how he had learned it, for he did not know Mr Beauchamp at all, he said, that the gentleman, just before he went, had patted the horse's neck, and said, 'my poor Martindale! I must take care of you, however!'

Lord Ashborough listened with a quivering lip and haggard eye as Mr Tims proceeded with his tale. "Have you been at his house?" he demanded, as the other concluded.

"I went there the first thing this morning, my lord," replied Mr Tims; "but I am very sorry to say, none of his servants know any thing whatever in regard to him. They all say they have been expecting him in town every day for the last week."

Lord Ashborough again rang the bell. "Order horses to the carriage immediately!" he said,

when his servant appeared ; “ and go on to Marlborough Street with my compliments to Sir George F——, and a request that he would send me an experienced officer, who can go down with me into the country directly. Mr Tims, I must enquire into this business myself. I leave you here behind to take every measure that is necessary ; but, above all things, remember that you have ten thousand pounds to pay into the hands of poor Beauchamp’s agents. Do not fail to do it in the course of to-day ; and explain to them that the business of the bill was entirely owing to forgetfulness. Let all the expenses be paid, and clear away that business at once. I am almost sorry that it was ever done.”

“ And about Sir Sidney Delaware, my lord ?” said Mr Tims. “ What”——

“ Proceed against him instantly !” interrupted the peer, setting his teeth firm. “ Proceed against him instantly, by every means and all means ! The same with his son ! Leave not a stone unturned to bring him to justice, or punish him for contumacy. If it had not been for those

two villains, and their damned intrigues, this would not have happened to poor Henry !”

Thus do men deceive themselves ; and thus those things that, would they listen to conscience instead of desire, might become warnings and reproofs, they turn to apologies for committing fresh wrongs, and fuel to feed the fire of their passions into a blaze. The observation may be commonplace, but it is true ; and let the man who does not do so, call it trite, if he will—no one else has a right.

It was evident that the earl was in no placable mood ; and Mr Tims, though he had much yet to speak of, and many a plan to propose, in order to overcome those legal difficulties to the design he had suggested, which were now springing up rapidly to his mind, yet thought it expedient to put off the discussion of the whole till his noble patron was in a more fitting humour, not a little apprehensive that, if he touched upon the matter at present, the earl’s anger might turn upon himself, for discovering obstacles in a path which he had formerly represented as smooth and easy. He therefore contented him-

self with asking a few more directions ; and, leaving Lord Ashborough, proceeded straight to Doctors' Commons to make the necessary arrangements concerning his uncle's property. That done, he visited the stamp-office ; his business there being of no small consequence to himself. It was neither more nor less than to cause a paper to be stamped, which he had found amongst other documents belonging to his uncle, which acknowledged the receipt of the sum of ten thousand pounds from Mr Tims of Ryebury, and was signed by Henry Beauchamp.

Considerable difficulties were offered at the stamp-office to the immediate legalization of this paper ; but Mr Tims was so completely aware of every legal point, and, through Lord Ashborough's business, was so well known at the office, that it was at length completed, and he immediately turned his steps towards the house of Messrs Steelyard and Wilkinson, who had lately become the law-agents of Henry Beauchamp. Before he had gone above half a mile on the road thither, he pulled the check-string of the hackney-coach in which he was seated, and

bade the man drive to Clement's Inn. This was immediately done; and Mr Tims entered his chambers, and retired into its inmost recesses, to pause upon and consider the step that he had just been about to take.

This was no other than to wait upon Messrs Steelyard and Wilkinson, and tender them Mr Beauchamp's stamped acknowledgement of the receipt of ten thousand pounds from his uncle, in discharge of the ten thousand pounds which he had been directed to pay by Lord Ashborough, appropriating to himself, as his uncle's heir, the money which was thus left in his hands. The matter was susceptible of various points of view; for, though the law does not recognize the principle of any man helping himself in such a manner, yet we are informed by those who know better than ourselves, that it is very difficult under many circumstances to prevent him from doing so. There was one point, however, which greatly incommoded Mr Tims, namely, that the acknowledgement in Mr Beauchamp's hand, was dated on the very day of the Ryebury murder, and thereby offered a strong presumption, that the money had

really been placed in Captain Delaware's chamber by his cousin. Many important consequences might ensue should Mr Beauchamp reappear, and declare such to have been the fact ; and although Mr Tims sincerely hoped and trusted that he was at the bottom of the sea, yet, as it might happen that he was not, the lawyer, with laudable precaution, sat down to state to himself the results which would take place, in each of the two cases, if he were now to present his acknowledgement.

He found, therefore, that should Mr Beauchamp never be heard of more, the case would go on against Captain Delaware, the suit in chancery might proceed against Sir Sidney Delaware, the twenty-five thousand pounds he had got would remain in his hands, and, by presenting the acknowledgement, he would be enabled to retain possession of ten thousand pounds more. All this, therefore, was in favour of acting as he had determined.

On the other hand, if Mr Beauchamp did reappear—which he did not think likely—he began to suspect that Captain Delaware would

be cleared, that the twenty-five thousand pounds would be transferred to Lord Ashborough, that the Emberton estate would be freed from all encumbrance, and that he would undoubtedly lose the twelve thousand pounds which had been stolen from his uncle, as well as Lord Ashborough's favour and business. "The more reason," he thought, "why I should immediately get this money, which undoubtedly did belong to my uncle! But, can I then continue the process against Captain Delaware," he continued, "with such a strong presumption of his innocence in my own hands?"—and he looked at the note, which nearly amounted to positive proof—"But what have I to do with that? It does not absolutely prove his innocence. The coroner's inquest has returned its verdict, and the law must take its course—besides, Henry Beauchamp is at the bottom of the sea, and a jury of fishes sitting on his own body by this time—Pshaw! I will present the acknowledgement to-morrow."

This doughty resolution Mr Tims accordingly fulfilled, and at noon, waited in person on Messrs Steelyard and Wilkinson. He was

shown into the private room of the latter, a seat was placed for him, and his business was asked.

“ Why, Mr Wilkinson,” he replied, “ I have first to explain to you an uncommonly awkward blunder, which took place by some forgetfulness on the part of my noble friend and client, the Earl of Ashborough, who, not adverting to the arrangements made between us, did not leave assets in my office to pay the bill drawn by you on Mr Beauchamp’s account. Had I been in town myself,” he added, feeling wealthy, “ of course I would have supplied the money ; but I, like my noble friend and client, was out of town till yesterday.”

“ Rather unfortunate, indeed, Mr Tims !” replied Mr Wilkinson dryly, “ especially as Mr Beauchamp drew for the money. His letter was couched in such terms as to permit of our handing over the assets that were in our hands ; but we cannot tell that he has not been put to great inconvenience. Lord Ashborough’s note was of course protested.—Here it is ! I hope you have come to retire it.”

“ I am directed by my Lord Ashborough to

do so," answered the lawyer; "but I rather imagine that Mr Beauchamp could not be put to much inconvenience; for I find by this document that he has obtained that sum, and four hundred and thirty-two pounds more, from my late unfortunate uncle, to whose property I have taken out letters of administration, and therefore, retaining the ten thousand pounds now in hand, I request you would hand me over the four hundred and thirty-two pounds at your convenience, when I will give you a receipt in full."

"Sir, this is somewhat unprecedented," replied Mr Wilkinson, "and I think you will find that money cannot thus be stopped, *in transitu*, without form of law. Such proceedings, if once admitted, would open a door to the most scandalous abuses. You acknowledge that you are commissioned to pay us this money, on account of Lord Ashborough. Having done so, you will have every right to present your claim against Mr Beauchamp, which will, of course, be immediately examined and attended to."

Mr Tims replied, and Mr Wilkinson rejoined;

but as it is more than probable that the reader may already have heard more than he desires of such a discussion, it will be unnecessary to say more than that Mr Tims adhered to his first resolution, and carried off the sum he had in hand, leaving Mr Wilkinson to send down to Lord Ashborough his protested bill, and Beauchamp's note of hand, if he pleased.

In the mean time, that noble lord proceeded, as fast as a light chariot and good horses could carry him, down to Emberton. It was dark, however, ere he arrived ; and the first object that met his sight the following morning, as he looked forth from the windows of the inn, was the old mansion, at the end of its wide and solitary park, with the stream flowing calmly on, through the midst of the brown grass and antique trees, and the swans floating upon its bosom in the early light. He had not seen it since he was a mere youth, and the finger of time had written that sad word *decay* on the whole aspect of the place. To the earl, through whose whole frame the same chilly hand had spread the growing stiffness of age, the sight was awfully sad, of the

place where he had spent the most elastic days of life, and it was long ere he could withdraw his eyes, as he paused and contemplated every feature of the scene, and woke a thousand memories that had long slept in the night of the past.

There was a change over all he saw since last he had beheld it—a gloom, a desolation, a darkness; and he felt, too, that there was a change as great in himself. But there was something more in his thoughts; the decay in his own frame was greater, more rapid, more irremediable. The scene might flourish again under some cultivating hand; the mansion, repaired with care, and ornamented with taste, might assume a brighter aspect, but nothing could restore life's freshness or the body's strength to him. Each day that past must see some farther progress in the downfall of his powers; and few, few brief months and years would behold him in the earth, without leaving a being behind him to carry on his lineage into time, if Henry Beauchamp were, indeed, as his fears anticipated. It was the first time that he had thought in such a sort for long;

and most unfortunate was it that there was no voice, either in his own heart, or from without, to point the moral at the moment, and to lead the vague ideas excited, of life, and death, and immortality, to their just conclusion. He thought of death and of his own decay indeed ; but he never thought of using better the life that still remained—for he scarcely knew that he had used the past amiss—and after indulging for some minutes those meditations that will at times have way, he found that they only served to make him melancholy, and turned again to the everyday round of life.

When he was dressed and had breakfasted, he set out for the small village near which Henry Beauchamp's hat had been found. In his way, he stopped also at the house where the hunter had been left, identified the horse, and listened attentively to the replies which the landlord and his servants made to the shrewd questions of an officer he brought with him from London.

The man's tale was very simple, and quite the same that he had given to Mr Tims. He described Henry Beauchamp very exactly, de-

clared that he had appeared grave and melancholy when he came there; and that he had never heard anything of him since. The servants told the same story; and Lord Ashborough only acquired an additional degree of gloom, from ascertaining in person the accuracy of the lawyer's report.

“ Oh, he is gone !” he thought, as he returned to his carriage, giving way to despair in regard to his nephew. “ He is gone ! This Sidney Delaware is destined to be the blight of all my hopes and expectations. If it had not been for his vile intrigues to get quit of that annuity, all this would never have happened; but I will make him rue it, should it cost me half my fortune.”

It may be asked, whether the earl did never for a moment allow the remembrance, that his own intrigues might have something to do with the business, to cross his mind. Perhaps he did —perhaps, indeed, he could not prevent such thoughts from intruding. But that made him only the more bitter against Sir Sidney Delaware. Have you never remarked a nurse, when a child

has fallen down and hurt itself, bid it beat the naughty ground against which it fell? Have you never seen a boy when he has cut his finger, throw the knife out of the window, or even a man curse the instrument that he has used clumsily? It is the first impulse of pampered human nature, to attribute the pangs we suffer to any thing but our own errors, and to revenge the pain, which we have inflicted on ourselves, upon the passive instrument. Lord Ashborough did no more, although, as he rolled on towards the sea-side, he meditated every sort of evil against Sir Sidney Delaware.

No great information could be obtained upon the coast, although Lord Ashborough spent the whole day in fruitless enquiries, and although one of the officers of the coast-guard gave every assistance, with the keen and active intelligence of a sailor.

The only thing elicited, which seemed to bear at all upon the fate of Henry Burrel, was the fact, that one of the sailors, on the look-out about a week before, had heard, or fancied he heard, a man's voice calling loudly for help. So con-

vinced had he been himself of the fact, that, with one of his comrades, he ran down the shore in the direction of the sounds ; but he could discover nothing. It was a fine clear moonlight night, he said, so that he must have seen any thing, if there had been any thing to see ; but the sound only continued a moment, and on not finding any person, he had concluded that it was all the work of fancy.

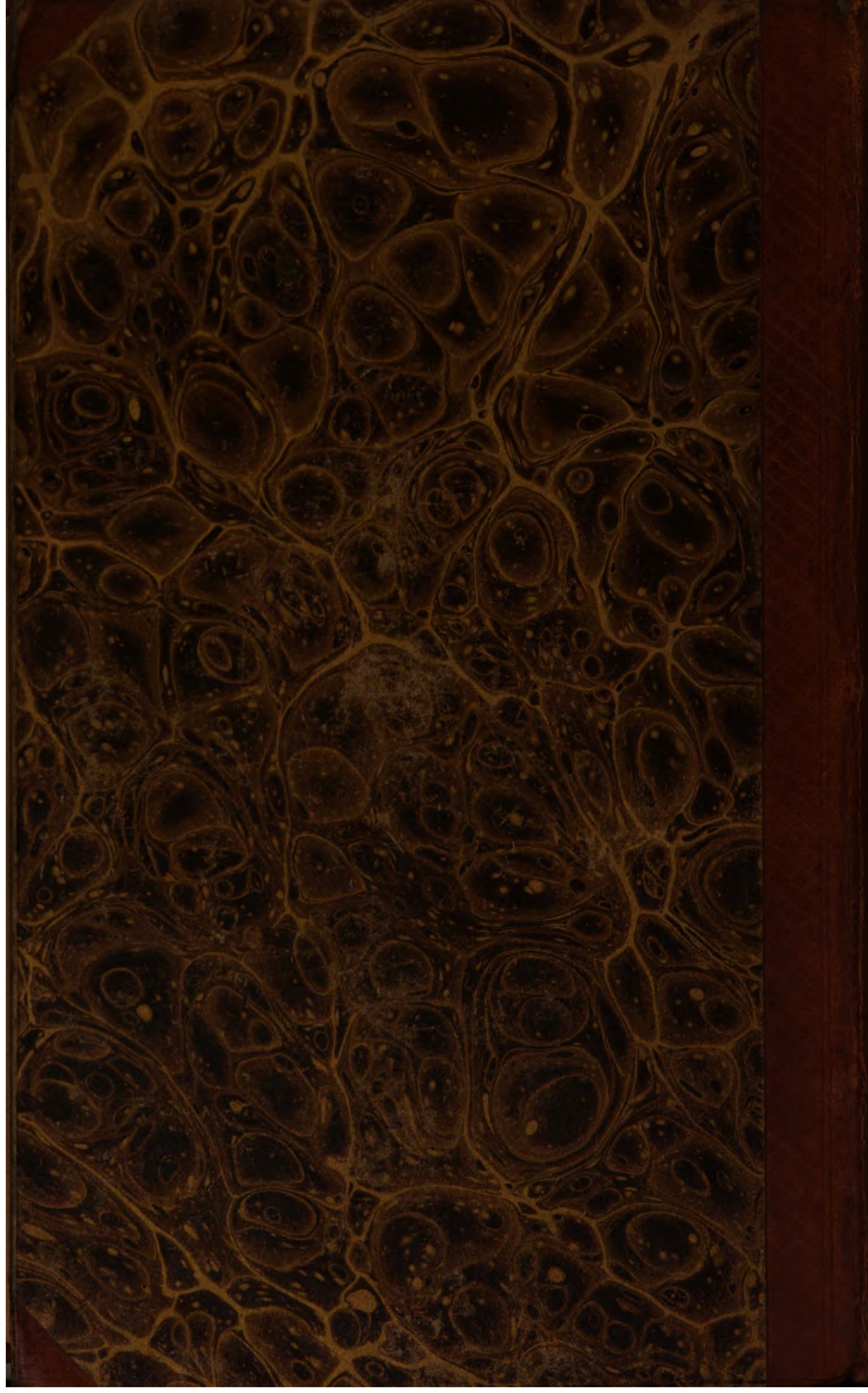
With these scanty tidings, which, of course, only served to increase his apprehensions, Lord Ashborough was obliged to be satisfied for the time ; and, returning to the inn at Emberton, he gave orders for printing placards, and inserting advertisements in the newspapers, each purporting that a large reward would be paid on the discovery of the body of a gentleman, supposed to be drowned, of whom a very accurate description was subjoined. The placards were pasted up all over the country ; and Lord Ashborough himself remained two days at Emberton, but there was something in the aspect of the old mansion and the park, that was painful to him. When he rose, there it was before his eyes ;

when he went out, there it stood, grave and gray, apparently in his very path ; when he returned, he found it still sad and gloomy at his door. At length, satisfied that he had done all in his power to discover his nephew, he returned to town, leaving the police-officer behind him, with orders to spare neither trouble nor expense to ascertain the facts ; and although the earl himself did not choose to appear openly in the business of Captain Delaware, a private hint was conveyed to the officer through his lordship's valet, that, to aid the others who were upon the search, might be very advantageous to himself.

END OF VOLUME SECOND.

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